

“THIS WAS A MAN!”



HATTIE  
HORNER  
LOUTHAN

Alice Crandall

Presented to Mr. & Mrs. Keller by  
The Mary Jane Theatrical Company

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Dorothy Weller

Father

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Bro. Puncher

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Alice J. Aquith



**“THIS WAS A MAN!”**



“ Paul.”

# "THIS WAS A MAN!"

*His life was gentle; and the elements  
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up,  
And say to all the world, "This Was a Man."*  
—SHAKESPEARE

## A ROMANCE

By

HATTIE HORNER LOUTHAN



1906

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*To the*  
*Memory of My Husband,*  
*Overton Earle Louthan*

2226234

THE SONGS HEREIN ARE REPRINTED BY COURTEOUS  
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The only safety in our American life lies in spurning the accidental distinctions which sunder one man from another, and in paying homage to each man only because of what he essentially is ; in stripping off the husks of occupation, of position, of accident, until the soul stands forth revealed, and we know the man only because of his worth as a man.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

What care I for caste or creed ?  
It is the deed, it is the deed !  
What for class or what for clan ?  
It is the MAN, it is the MAN !  
Heirs of love and joy and woe,  
Who is high and who is low ?  
Mountain, valley, sky and sea  
Are for one Humanity.

What care I for robe or stole ?  
It is the soul, it is the soul !  
What for crown or what for crest ?  
It is the heart within the breast.  
It is the faith, it is the hope,  
It is the striving up the slope ;  
It is the brain and eye to see  
One God and one Humanity !

ROBERT LOVEMAN.

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# THIS WAS A MAN.

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## PROLOGUE.

### THE SINS OF THE FATHERS.

“COME into the study, Eldreth, I must speak with you. No, you can not see her; she is quite prostrated. It has been overwhelming, even to me, this sudden knowledge that you have broken one of God’s greatest laws. And you realize, doubtless, how this knowledge alone would deter me from giving you my sister’s hand in marriage, even if I had not learned beyond the shadow of a doubt—”

The young Rector hesitated and lifted mild, rebuking eyes to the friend whom he had loved, still loved.

Pierce Eldreth remained standing near the door he had just closed. There was an annoyed look on his fair, handsome face, a glitter in his blue eyes, as he exclaimed:

“Oh, you men of the cloth are always so uncharitable with the mistakes of one’s boyhood.”

“Your little Richard is barely two years old, I believe,” observed the Rector coldly, “And when I think that it was about two years ago that this girl attached herself to my sister, volunteering to serve her at the poor pay afforded in a country rectory; when I recall her anxiety to leave Denver and come to Eldhurst, the inevitable conclusion is—”

“That she wanted to be near her child, naturally,” concluded the other for him, “Though declining the sum my father set upon her, stormily, insultingly refusing it, yet she seemed willing enough to fall in with his scheme of taking the boy and rearing him as a gentleman here at Eldhurst. And she swore to corroborate the story of my early widowerhood, and to keep to herself—what she seems after all to have told you—if only we would allow her to see the child once in a while. Father was so impressed with her beauty that his usual clear-headedness was blinded to my plan (surely the wiser) of The Rescue down in Denver, or the Florence Crittenden Home for such as she, where she could have had her child. But the old man got more than one set English notion along toward the last. The good Lord left him sense enough to see I couldn’t marry her, else there’d have been the deuce of a time; for father

never knew from actual experience what back talk was."

"And the knowledge of the one fact mentioned," resumed the Rector in his even, placid way, taking up the thread of his earlier remark, "would alone deter me from granting my sister's hand, even if we had not learned from Marah's own lips last night that your former illicit relations with her had been renewed during this period of two years under my roof—barring the six months since my sister's return from college."

"*'We'?* Good Lord! she did not tell you all this before Miss Allan?"

The Rector nodded, quite beyond words; for there was no repentance in the face before him, no sorrow for sin, merely consternation at having been detected. In God's eyes, how much better was this one than Menendez, the Mexican outlaw, as yet undetected, hiding there at Eldhurst?

By and by he said in a low voice: "So you see, Eldreth, my consent is quite out of the question, even if my sister did not know. Good-night—good-bye;" and he held out his hand.

His companion stared at him in haughty silence for an instant.

"I did not call to beg your consent to our approaching marriage, Edwin Allan."

"Why then?"

"To see her, and by God! I'm going to do it."

"She will not see you."

"I'll have that from her, sir."

The young Rector lifted his serene eyes to the flushed face, and he unwittingly uttered the words best calculated to strengthen the other's purpose:

"Pierce Eldreth, do you think that my sister, best loved of our blameless father and our sainted mother now gone, daughter of a long immaculate line of the purest, noblest New England blood, herself unsullied by so much as an impure thought; a queen among women, white-souled and royal, my helper in His work,—do you imagine for a moment that she would stoop to unite with one whose past, aye, and whose present, are what yours are, self-confessed?"

"That is precisely what I am here to ascertain," replied his companion coolly, "but I'll have my information first-hand. Miss Allan has reached her majority, I believe."

Edwin Allan grasped the table edge with nervous fingers and leaned towards the young man who stood with clenched hands regarding him defiantly.

At that moment an inner door swung and a young woman stood upon the threshold, a tall, queenly blonde with a royally poised head and a delicate, high-bred face. She was clad in some long, sweeping white robe; her hair indicated recent

contact with restless pillows and her eyes the recent touch of tears. But the *aristocrat* was written over her from head to foot; and you at once recognized her strong points of appeal to a patrician like Pierce Eldreth; how he would ponder upon such a woman to grace Eldhurst, upon the children to spring from the marriage-bed, to perpetuate his old and honorable name.

The tense silence, the constrained attitude of the two men at once betrayed to her the subject of their discussion. Murmuring an apology, she was about to withdraw, but her brother signed her to remain.

"Edith, Mr. Eldreth does me the honor," and ever so slight a circumflex crept into the Rector's tone, "to request your hand in holy matrimony," and a curious little emphasis fell upon the last two words, "I have assured him that there can be but one answer, after Marah's story last night; but one answer from an Allan and the daughter of our mother. But he wishes it from your lips. Speak!"

Slowly, with her fascinated gaze passing from the troubled eyes of her brother to the passionate, entreating eyes of her lover, Edith Allan advanced to the center of the study. Slowly her proud head drooped, a delicate color staining her face and throat. Involuntarily both men took a step toward her. Indecision was so foreign to her that both remained breathless lest they lose her words.

"There is, there can be, but one answer," she began.

"I pray God—" interposed her brother, alarmed by the expression of her face.

"I love you, only you," breathed her lover, approaching her with out-reached arms, "The woman is nothing to me, nothing."

"Forgive me, Edwin," murmured the girl, stooping to kiss his hand with reverence and affection, "I know all; have weighed all; yet—yet there can be . . . but one answer," and turning she stretched meeting hands to her lover's eager, thrilling clasp.

Stunned, dazed, the Rector turned from the room. As he closed the door behind him, the figure of a slender, dark-haired woman started up from a listening attitude at the door-frame.

"Marah," he whispered, "Marah," and his voice lingered tenderly, compassionately over the syllables of her name.

But the woman staggered away, supporting herself along the wall, and she did not once look back.

In the darkness of the porch, she leaned, faint and nerveless.

"The 'woman!'" she repeated whisperingly, "'Nothing! *nothing!*'"

A glowing point of fire pricked the blackness out

near the gate, and a taint of *cigarros* hung in the May air.

The woman straightened tensely.

“Manuel! Manuel Menendez!”

Her summons was a mere breath, but the fire-point described a swift downward arc, and a man's form, dimly outlined, flung down at her feet.

“*Señorita mía*, thou deedst call?”

She stooped.

“You are always here—at the gate; in the church, even at choir-practice; under these windows. Why?”

“A—h, thou know-est.”

“I? How should I?”

The dim form prostrated itself yet lower. “*Te adoro!*” came breathing up to her, her dress-hem at his lips.

She laughed contemptuously. “*Te ador-o!*” she mimicked, “And is *that* all?” It was taunt and challenge commingled.

The worshipful form straightened to its knees.

“*No le comprendo . . . a vd,*” he stammered.

A pause.

The man leaped to his feet, his face thrust close to hers in a vain endeavor to read her expression.

“*All?*” he whispered, “*Dios! Dios!*” Then clutching her arm with two shaking hands, he

panted: "*Es posible? Thou . . . I . . . All?*"

The darkness was heavy at the moment, the silence heavier. But at length the fateful word fell:

"*All.*"

"*Hermosa mia!*" His grasp tightened, his breath quickened. "We thees vera night weel fly far-r. My country—no. Why, matteers not. Put far-r, now, thees vera night. Ees eet not so?"

She wrenched from him, crowding back into the doorway.

"Tomorrow, if—"

"Eef—" he echoed with quivering eagerness, following her.

"We are to stay here—here at Eldhurst; you as head-shepherd, I—"

"*Si, si,*" he laughed musically, "As thou weelt, *querida mia*, as thou weelt. *Mañana!*"

"And—wait! one thing more. No, no,—listen to me! You are to tell him, your master, of our—that I love you; that I have loved you since first I came to the Rectory; you, Manuel Menendez, no one but you. Ha! ha! . . . Then, tomorrow—You will not fail me, Manuel? . . . As I have loved no one else, ever. Tell him that. Yes, yes, sometime . . . afterward . . . not yet . . . I— Stand back! . . . So. Remember: we are to stay right here; you are to tell

him tonight yet,—that I love you, that I told you so. What? *I fail you?* Never! I swear it. Do I not love you? Ha, ha, ha! . . . Oh, we'll see! Go, now. Go!"

And the door was closed violently in his face.

## CHAPTER I.

## TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

THE service was done, and the dying tones of the rich organ still bore the benediction's plea above the departing congregation.

Lilys Eldreth came down from the choir gallery, music-roll and parasol in hand, and was about to follow her uncle, who had disappeared through the side door toward the Rectory, when a sign from her father summoned her to where the Eldreth carriage waited at the church door.

Lilys was a slim, lissome girl of perhaps twenty, with the erect carriage, the superb vitality of body and the quick grace of movement that bespoke an active outdoor life; strong, supple little wrists and firm ankles that told of tennis, golf and climbing. Her dress to-day was an earth-born cloud of tulle, which had an earthy and curiously individual way of clinging to her; the skirt just now held up from the ground, exposing one small, high-arched foot emerging from a foam of snowy lace. Her gypsy face was shadowed by a wide ghost of a hat, one of

those skeleton nothings that nods elastically with the wearer's every motion and seems momentarily threatening to lift and soar. Her complexion was flush-pink seen through ivory. Her eyes were stars at dusk. The crimson poppies at her bodice matched her full lips. As she approached the carriage, she spread up her white parasol, whose drooping drifts of costly lace formed the ideal background for her sparkling face and ringlets of jetty hair.

Howard and DeLacy bared their heads as she stopped beside the carriage, and her half-brother Richard made a move toward the driver's seat to make a place for her beside their father. But no, she said, she must talk with Uncle Allan about some work on her herbarium for tomorrow. She would get Nina and be home in time for dinner with them—consulting the tiny gem-studded watch at her belt—but now she was going to the Rectory.

She repeated this last in her slow, wilful way, with her eyes on Paul's face; but he seemed fully occupied with the fretful horses and did not look up, though his heightened color attested his consciousness of her gaze. Then she tossed her music-roll to her brother, smiled into DeLacy's admiring eyes, blew a kiss to her father and drifted away.

"You see she has a fashion all her own of getting her way with me, as with every one else," laughed Pierce Eldreth, as the carriage toiled along the steep

road that wound from the church to Eldhurst House, "In her fair lexicon there seems to be no such words as 'May I?' Once in a while she asks my consent to some of her doings, but it's generally *after* the doings." Then, as though picking up a previous theme, "I doubt if she would go willingly. She's quite attached to things hereabout. She's never been away to school as Richard has. Her uncle has taught her, and he and the boys of the place, Paul and Pepito and the others, have made paths for her among the hills, and they have regular runs after bugs and flowers and what not. You see, her mother died at Lilys's birth, and the girl has never had a moment's restraint. She's as headstrong as the colts she rides. Of course, if I said 'Go,' why—" He ended with a shrug and a scowl that went far toward explaining the implicit obedience rendered by Eldhurst's army of employes, from the lowliest sheepboy to the foreman.

"But I tell you it's a crime," argued DeLacy, "such a voice as that in a little mission church for the benefit of cowboys and half-breeds. Beg pardon, but it's a clear case of sweetness wasted,—sweetness, volume, power. Mr. Howard acknowledges he has done all he can for her," with a bow to the old Chorister opposite him, "The East has conservatories, masters, opportunities; you have money and to spare. I think I never heard just such a

voice, such first-water purity, such peculiar carrying power, such haunting after-glow. Her mother sang?"

"Not a note!" and Eldreth's glance sought Howard's eyes half-inquiringly, as though the thought had never before occurred to him, "She wrote songs, the words I mean; but she did not sing."

He fell into a reverie from which he was roused by his son.

"I don't see why she can't go, Father. Allan's got her well ahead on book matters; has kept her nearly up with me at the university."

"And I have talked conservatory to you for nearly a year," put in the Chorister, "I do not know what we'll do without her—" The old man's voice faltered and broke curiously; but DeLacy said in his winning tones:

"Come, be persuaded, Eldreth. We must have our way this time. My aunt will bring her party down from Estes Park a week from tomorrow on their way to Denver and thence direct to Atlantic City. Miss Lilys has never been east, and she could not see it under better chaperonage than Mrs. Scott-DeLacy's. Your daughter can easily be ready in a week's time."

There was a long pause as the horses toiled on toward the summit of the hill. Eldreth was reflecting deeply. DeLacy was studying his face eagerly.

Young Eldreth was sheltering a match in both hands and trying to light his cigarette. The old musician was looking off toward the Peak with blurring eyes. Paul Menendez, pale as death, cut the straining horses viciously, then pulled them down, and the carriage started forward again with a lurch.

"Well then—she goes!" announced Eldreth decisively. His brow cleared. He reached his cigar-case to Howard and DeLacy. Then turning sharply, as the carriage gave another lurch:

"Paul, you'd better learn to drive!"

---

The service done, the Rector turned aside to his quiet, book-walled study. He was in no mood for the summer guests, the worldly talk and jest at Eldhurst, nor for the lengthy dinner in the evening; hence, avoiding his brother-in-law's eye and ignoring the Eldhurst carriage, he shut himself in his favorite room of the modest rectory which adjoined the church.

That closing solo haunted him. It roused old memories that beat their bars and wailed. It was Lilys's voice and yet not Lilys's voice that had winged the words:

"Oh Thou who shunned not Calvary,  
My tortured soul pours out to Thee  
Its anguished pleading: 'Help Thou me,  
Thou loving One!'"

For how could Lilys sing that, Lilys who was only a child, and had never suffered?

Nay, that other voice that Sunday after Sunday for nearly two years had floated down from the choir-loft above his head, that wondrous voice with all its tell-tale changes.

At first, despite the woman's past, then unknown to him, her voice had often the sweet, care-free tones of Lilys's or of the lark's or the gurgling notes of a mountain-brook in May.

Then, when Pierce Eldreth had come, a softer note; a bird at dawn of spring; a brook caressing loved, but hindering, stones. How that thrilling undertone, engulfing him from above, would, in spite of him, weigh his senses down, before the wings of his spirit could gather strength to bear him upward into his lofty theme.

Another change. The voice swelled, a *gloria in excelsis* poured to love; the bird at nesting time, the cataract unchecked, the woman's voice, passion-deepened.

Yet another change when the climax in four lives had approached: grief, despair, wounded love and pride; the stricken, mateless bird; the torrent broken on the cruel rocks.

That closing solo; that last Sunday; she had sung it then, each note a wail, each syllable a prayer, sweet, sweet, like liquid pearls, slow beading from

threads of bitterness. She had sung and gone; had moved down the aisle, past the Eldreth pew which held the bridal party, in its midst her own child and his, the groom's—had passed the church's door, nor entered it again in all these—twenty years.

Yes, it was twenty years since she had taken up her self-imposed exile there upon the mountain side. His study window framed her little cabin, a tuft of brown upon the hill's green robe. In the near foreground was the grave-yard, where gleamed a costly monument. Aye, it was more than twenty years since his sister had been laid to sleep beneath that stone. Oh, double loss! And he had been left to gaze from that window over the tomb of the dead, up to the tomb of the living,—to look and long for twenty years!

Why had she afterward grown so hard and embittered, so inapproachable? Surely, she had forgiven; for had she not risen from her own bed with an infant and gone up to Eldhurst on that day of gloom and death, when the little Lilys had been left wailing and motherless? And yet it had been but a momentary softening, for Christ had no dwelling-place in her heart and life now, there in the humble home where Marah Menendez lived in loneliness with her son.

He recalled how, after a decade of widowhood, she had led her little Paul, climbing the toilsome

path to Eldhurst House and stood him before Pierce Eldreth, as the brothers-in-law sat in the western veranda. It was the first day she had set foot upon the hill since Edith's death, and now Paul was almost ten years old.

"Since Fate has robbed me of the man I loved," and how her dark beauty had glowed as she spoke, standing with her hands upon the shoulders of the wondering boy, "has robbed you of a willing slave who owed you much,—life, protection, all; since Marah Maitland can owe Pierce Eldreth naught, I bring you all I have, this boy of mine. His services are yours till the ten years bring him to manhood and leave me no longer the say-so. Such was the wish of Manuel Menendez who, he confessed, owed his all to you. The daughter she left you, an Allan and an Eldreth both, will find use for one more slave. It is hard to give him up, his child and mine, but Marah Maitland never owes, never forgets."

Pierce Eldreth had heard her through, a bitter smile upon his face, had said: "Thus should it be, thus shall it be," and coldly signed her dismissal.

Marah had bowed low and deferentially to hide the cruel light in her eyes; had turned with just one backward glance to note how Eldhurst's master stood perplexed before that fearless boy with his blue poet-eyes and hair of spinner's gold; had passed

where he, Edwin Allan sat, had laughed her mirthless laugh, muttering:

“The debt shall all be paid, Pierce Eldreth, all. Thus should it be, thus shall it be. *Amen.*”

As rose-trees on either side the stone wall of a garden, so grew those three children, Richard and Lilys Eldreth and Paul Menendez: the two within the garden, protected, nurtured, trained with care; the one without, overlooked, untrained; the two up-trellised by the friendly wall, the one buffeted and whipped about by every hostile wind; all climbing upward, yet ever that high wall between the two within and the one without the garden; though near, yet always the unmoved wall between; though the closest companions, even playmates,—still the wall between!

Pierce Eldreth, proud of birth and unbroken family line, looked on and smiling boasted, “Blood will tell.” And once the Rector had heard Marah repeat the words while looking on the three children at play, “Ah, blood will tell.”

And he, Edwin Allan, had looked on and vowed in secret to help the friendless boy outside the wall; for he saw the angel in the unhewn marble of the character, in the hapless life thus bound through youth and younger manhood to such a “slave-driver” as Pierce Eldreth was known to be throughout Boulder County. Poor Paul!

. . . . . "He alas!  
Had lived but on this earth a few sad years,  
And so his lot was ordered that his father  
First turned the moments of awakening life  
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope."

Aye, poor Paul! If indeed, blood would tell, what then of the blood coursing through the unfortunate boy's veins? his mother, with her misspent past; his father, author of some unnamable crime in his own country, a crime for which avenging justice, gold-bought for a time, had finally overtaken him, death in its most ignominious form. Yet, despite this double heritage, Edwin Allan had undertaken character-building for this offspring of crime and passion. For was it not for just such as he that the Pure One had died? . And today—

Of a sudden the Rector felt his eyes clasped by soft fingers and a girl-voice cried:

"Who is it? Guess!"

"Lilys," he exclaimed as, undoing the clasp of memory from his heart, he undid her fingers from his eyes and drew the girl around into his vision.

## CHAPTER II.

## MY LADY HEROINE.

How shall I write her down, this mountain child ?  
A winged flash across the summer's smile ;  
A tender bud up-pushing toward the light ;  
A glancing ray upon a changeful stream.

How shall I write her down ? A winged thing  
That lures to vain and passionate pursuit ;  
A bud with dew and gladness on its head ;  
A ray from heaven to 'lumine all the earth.

How shall I write her down ? Ah, flitting life,  
Hast aught save gauzy wings and wayward will ?  
O bud, once opened to the wooing noon,  
And wilt thou aught deny him, aught withhold ?  
O sun-born ray, once caught by Love's strong lens,  
Mayst thou not kindle fires unquenchable ?

“WHAT, Uncle, dreaming dreams and seeing visions in this book-stuffed room, a day like this when my blood is fairly tingling for a gallop on Bonita over the hills against the wind? I'd go yet this afternoon if I dared; but I couldn't get back in time to dress for dinner. And Paul couldn't go with me this morning; had to go to town to meet Mr. Nolan because William's wrist was too stiff to

manage the sorrels. Paul is always made to do what the other men shirk. But even if he should be let off, he isn't a bit entertaining any more; so grumpy lately. He'd rather poke over some old book than to amuse me. I told him I believed he was yearning for solitary confinement; that was when he had the audacity to quote to me—to *me!*

‘There's times when I'm's unsociable as stone,  
An' sorto suffocate to be alone;  
I'm crowded jest to think that folks is nigh,  
An' can't bear nothin' closer than the sky.’

If he goes with me, he carries his head up among the clouds and sees nothing lower than the Peak; goes with me ‘in the flesh,’ as you would put it, while his unwilling spirit is miles and miles away. Whatever is to become of me?”

A gesture of mock despair, a childish little laugh that rippled off into the sweet lark-notes of a song; then she perched herself up on the arm of his great chair and tried hard to look woful.

“I fancy Paul has something more to do than gather ferns for My Lady's summer house,” smiled her uncle, “Do you forget all that your father heaps upon his young shoulders, especially since Ben is having his rheumatism? Nothing goes direct to your father. Max reports matters concerning the Lower Ranch and the sheep to Paul; Webb the saw-

mill affairs; Wagner the crops; and even Bradley the quarry matters, and through Paul, they reach your father. He will eventually take Ben's place as foreman."

"That's just it," nodded the girl, "that is exactly what I am complaining of. Do you forget the day Marah first brought him up to the House? Helene had me out playing in the summer house. Papa came dragging him out to me and said: 'Here, here's some one for you to boss. He is for you, exclusively.' Helene will tell you. And now, after we've played and ridden and read and had such jolly times together all these years, now when the old place is dull as a graveyard, and summer is here, now it's 'Paul, come here,' and 'Paul, go there.' And what of me? Who can ride so well or find my specimens? Who knows the paths and the mountains so well? And who can read so well, or if we haven't a book along, who can tell pretty stories about the rocks and trees and flowers till, though we are alone in the woods, there seem to be living, breathing, understanding creatures all around us? Pray, what of me, if he must make all these stupid reports and go to Denver and to Boulder on business continually? 'Take Pepito,' Papa says; but I will not. Pepito's dull, doesn't know quartz from cobblestone, and he isn't company. I will not do without Paul. He is mine."

“Softly, child, softly!” protested her uncle, laying a cool hand across her pouting red lips, “Slave and feudal days are passed and gone, the days when man could say to his brother-man, ‘Thou art mine, thy time, thy labor, thine all.’”

“Not here at Eldhurst. Those men up at Quarry Town, dull as the blocks they hew, mere hands to wield the drill and hammer; Max’s herders, as unthinking as the sheep they tend, mere feet to patrol the sheep-folds; Webb’s lumbermen, not nearly so sensible as the trees they fell (if half of Paul’s tree-legends be true), mere arms to swing the axe and guide the saw: aren’t they all dependent upon Papa? Doesn’t he feed and clothe and shelter them and their families? Didn’t their fathers work for grandpapa? Are not employment, pay, protection anything? He thinks for them just as the head does for the hands and the feet, for what more are they?”

“It is your father speaks, my child, for of these things you know nothing. Alas! that from years of my teachings you have gathered no crumb of the world-wide, all-inclusive love of God. There is no caste in divine love, no high nor low, nor rich nor poor, as we know them. God gave His Son, that *whosoever* will may come.”

“No caste!” echoed Lilys scornfully, “The half-breed herder, dirt, dogs; sheep-washing, shearing,

pasturing; to eat, to sleep, to drink, to smoke. Then you, my Uncle and Mr. Howard, both students still, books, music, reading; thinking, preaching, advancing; to live, to rise, to do good, to be remembered. Gaze on this picture and then on that, the one and the other, and then say there is no caste, divine as well as human."

"The one has a soul as precious in God's sight as has the other, ponder that," admonished her uncle impressively. Then he added as he lovingly smoothed back her hair, "And Paul? In which of your pictures does he belong, little Lady Aristocrat? Where shall we classify him, slave or equal, since there seems to be no middle ground at Eldhurst?"

"Who, Paul? Why you know without asking."

"Aye, that I do," averred her uncle, "Listen: let me tell you how he has spent his nights these past years, while you and Richard and your guests were banqueting and dancing or sleeping up at the House. He knows these book-friends as well as I do, for we have toiled and delved by night after his weary days of fatiguing manual labor. I have taken him the way I have taken you, nay, farther, higher; and he has broken a wider way, and blazed many a by-path unknown to you. Where you have swallow-skimmed, he has paused, asking *when* and *how* and *why*. For his is the rare spirit to whom all toil is sweet, so Truth be at the farthest goal. Book-

lover, nature-worshipper, poet-soul—But I am forgetting. The two pictures, the one and the other. Where shall we classify the son of Manuel Menendez?”

Lilys’s large dark eyes grew thoughtful, unusually so for them, as she admitted:

“Yes, I know. He makes Nina’s Bible-class outlines and does all Papa’s book-keeping and estimating, and writes all of his letters, and meets the business callers. He is all you say, I suppose. I never thought of it before. But,” and pride flashed up into the eyes, “for all that he is a Menendez, son of a peon herdsman and of my mother’s serving-maid, while I, though no scholar, am an Allan and an Eldreth, and Papa says blood will tell. Now, uncle, you know you couldn’t call him a gentleman.”

The Rector reached for a small morocco Amiel in the book-case, turned its leaves with the deft familiarity of the true bookman and read:

“‘Every one may become a gentleman even though he may be born in the gutter. . . . It is the birth-right of every one to rise. A man may be born rich and noble,—he is not born a gentleman. A gentleman is the free man, the man who is stronger than things, and believes in personality as superior to . . . rank and power. It means a character which possesses itself, a force which governs itself, a liberty which affirms and regulates itself according to the type of true dignity. . . . It is more moral than intellectual. . . . He watches over his language, manners, . . . has dominion over his instincts and passions.’

And in the light of this definition, is not Paul Menendez one of God's own gentlemen?"

His companion laughed carelessly. "Your question isn't in the catechism, Mr. Minister, or else I don't know my lesson. Maybe he is one of those prove-the-rule exceptions. I don't know. I don't care." Then the eyes grew merry again as was their wont. "So he has come by night to study? has had a secret from me all these years? Ah, he shall pay for this this very week. I'll make him talk by way of penance. He shall suffer. For he dislikes 'full speech;' quotes 'Silence is vocal if we listen well,' and once even recommended the rest-cure for tongues. For he takes little liberties of that sort, for all he is so humble in the presence of the Little Mistress."

Her uncle smiled. "Since I am betraying my disciple into the hands of the enemy, I may as well tell it all, though he wouldn't thank me. For a long time now he has taken all my work in the Mission Night School up at the quarries."

"I am sure Marah does not know all this. For once I asked her if he might not study with me, thinking he might help me, you know. She only laughed in that provoking way of hers and said: 'Manuel Menendez's son study the classics!' But she would not say yes. Who helps Paul in the night school, Uncle?"

"Nina with the older ones; Ruth Bradley with the little folks; but either he or I must be there, for Ruth is uneducated, and both girls have to cling pretty close to the books."

"And does he . . . do you and he love Nina and Ruth for helping you?"

"Very much, dear. They are good girls, with hearts full of love for those less fortunate than they."

To his surprise, Lilys suddenly leaned her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears.

"My dear child," he began, when as suddenly she brushed away her tears, sprang up and laughed her girlish laugh.

"Oh, it's nothing, Uncle. Your sadness is contagious. Confess, now: when I first came you were sad; your thoughts were twenty miles away."

"Say, rather, twenty years away. It was longer ago than that I last heard the solo you sang, 'The Suppliant.'"

"Ah! Mr. Howard didn't want me to sing it; should have known that would determine me the more to do it. Marah sang it when she was his soprano. Was Marah's voice so beautiful? I never heard her, and Paul says she never sings around home. You promised sometime to tell me her story, didn't you? Was it true that Mr. Howard once loved her? Couldn't some suitor have saved her from throwing herself away on Papa's head shep-

herd? How could she do it? He must have been a very wicked man, for Mr. Howard says his hanging was a just judgment. What had he done?"

"Where shall I begin answering, *Señorita Inquisitor*? Yes, Marah's voice was marvelous. The Mexicans of the Lower Ranch called her '*Señorita Pajara*' (Miss Bird) and the Indians gave her a name signifying 'Singing Feather.' But, Lilys, you must go. You have yet to dress for dinner and your father was never a patient man. Your questions will keep."

"Yes, and you'll put me off the next time, just as you are doing now. Helene always evades when I ask her; and the once I asked Papa you can't imagine how cross he was; said it was an evidence of low taste to take the slightest interest in people of that class, and he didn't want to hear me mention her or her tribe ever again. And it just makes me want to know about her more than ever. I suppose Paul knows, but of course I always felt a delicacy about mentioning either of his parents to him. Tell me one thing: Was Marah ever sweet and lovable? She is so harsh and cold now to every one. Paul says he cannot recall the time she ever kissed him, except he made her. And they say he is so good to her."

"Yes, once she was loving and beautiful as a painter's model. One man's selfishness changed all.

But go, my child. The story is too deeply sad for your ears. You would not half understand it—thank God! Go, roam the hills and know the ways of bees and birds, the love of rose and nightingale, no gust of passion stronger than your own April tears. Go, hear the pretty legends Paul tells of trees and flowers and the winged things. Paul is a safe and a wise teacher. Go, be a child in heart and life. Let no one persuade you otherwise for many a day. If you love me, you will please me best by remembering what I am saying. There is time enough—Ah, Paul! Come in.”

## CHAPTER III.

## THE LOWLY HERO.

THE newcomer was tall and lithe and fair, with a touch of sun upon hair and cheek. His was a face to be remembered, a face that, having once seen, you felt unreasoningly drawn to see again and again. The eyes were grave yet marvelously tender, and the soul that looked through them attracted irresistibly because it gave only momentary and but half-revealing glimpses of itself; and you could but feel that behind that dreamy, poetic half-smile there lay a will that, however velvet-fingered, was iron-wristed and steel-sinewed. There would be no moments of hopeless hesitation in his presence. He was by nature positive, decisive, possessing that rare ability to adjust and weigh arguments during their presenting, so that his "Yes" or "No" often seemed hasty. He would think rapidly and act promptly in emergencies. Assertive, virile strength spoke in the vigorous, well-knit limbs, the strong, shapely hands, the firm-set mouth. He was a man's man from his own choice, yet, as such, was unconsciously attractive to women.

Lilys turned a radiant, welcoming face to him as he closed the study door, and had the Rector known young hearts as well as he knew old books, he might have noted the swift, involuntary meeting of their eyes, the something inexplicable, something primal, interchanged, all unconsciously, in the flashing glance.

"I thought you never would come," she cried innocently enough, "but now you're here, please persuade Uncle that I'm not the infant he thinks me. Why, I am nearly twenty and a half years old; as old as you are. For Helene told me that Marah said you were just three days old when she came up to nurse my Mamma the day I was born. Three days are not so much to boast of, Señorito."

"Mr. Allan will tell you that I am the older by at least a century," he replied with a flitting smile, and as he sank into a chair near the library table he did in truth look old, even ill. During the silence that ensued, he rested his elbow on the table, his head on his hand, and kept his eyes fixed on the carpet.

The girl moved to him as to a magnet, moved away to the window, but returned as though irresistibly impelled and hovered near him, pulling the red poppies from her corsage bouquet and lightly pelting the hand resting on the table.

"Paul, this afternoon late, after our dinner, you know, I want to go ——"

He shook his head, still not looking up.

"I am to drive Mr. Nolan back to catch the Denver train."

"Of course!" sarcastically, "I never want you here of late but you've been told to do something else."

She endured the second long pause as long as possible, then exclaimed with childish petulance, glancing from him to her uncle:

"Oh, such a pair of you—such a polite, cheerful, amusing pair! Some day I'm going to run off from this humdrum old Eldhurst, where they'd rather do figuring and make reports than amuse the only girl on the place,—away off ever so far from the same old mountains, same old sunsets: where it's latin and botany and choir practice from morning till night, and piano lessons and busy uncles and cross brothers. Then you'll be sorry and wish for the good old times we've had galloping over the hills, and reading and singing. And you'll miss me, too, with no one to sing to you, and no one to boss you, and——"

She paused. Her uncle smiled at her meditatively, his thoughts far away, and said nothing. Paul's head drooped lower on his hand and he too remained silent.

"I'll not stay another minute," declared the girl indignantly. "I'm going to find Sarah and something good to eat. Then I'll get Nina and go up to the House and see if Dixie and Bert Delacy can't be more entertaining than you two." And flinging the last red poppy, she flounced out of the study, banging the door behind her. They heard her tinkle the treble of the piano in the adjoining room, and her laughing, bubbling voice reached them:

    " Oh, I love the fields and hills,  
        And the shady woodland rills,  
Where never earthly cares invade ;  
        But love and grief and pain,  
        They can never, never reign  
In the heart of merry mountain maid.

    Oh, the wind's soft kiss,  
        This my deepest bliss,  
And I follow him through glen and glade ;  
    Oh, the dewdrop clear,  
        This my only tear,  
Such a merry, merry mountain maid ! "

The Rector smiled, then sighed, as the melody went diminishing off toward the kitchen; then he turned to speak to his companion, but stopped short at sight of his face.

Very evidently the young man had forgotten the Rector's presence, for he had gathered all the poppies and was first pressing the silken petals to his

lips, devoutly, hungrily, then gazing down at the kiss-crushed flowers as a priest might yearn above his crucifix.

"Paul!" Astonishment, reproach, grief, quivered in Edwin Allan's tone. "*Paul!*" he repeated.

The younger man did not lift his head. So well he knew his beloved teacher's voice that he could read disappointment and rebuke in the very intonation. But a greater pain was at his heart and its lines were etching upon his sensitive face.

"They are going to take her away—in a week." His voice was a half sob.

"The DeLacys? Ah! Howard and I have urged it for a year. We shall miss her as we would miss the sunshine—"

But he spoke to unhearing ears.

"A week . . . . a week," muttered his companion, as though unable to grasp the idea, "only seven days and seven nights to cry to God to stop the sun and stars—and then away, *away, not here* . . with—" He broke off, and flinging his arms across the table, hid his face down upon them.

The elder man stood with compressed lips and sorrowful eyes.

"I could never have dreamed this of you, Paul," he expostulated, "you, who realize——"

But the other silenced him with an eloquent gesture as he sprang erect.

"I know all you would say, Mr. Allan—the chasm between Pierce Eldreth's daughter and the son of Manuel Menendez. I am well aware that Eldhurst is not in democratic America where men are born equal, but in feudal Britian where caste-lines are dead-lines. I realize the value they set upon high birth and pure blood. I know where I'm classed. I know that when she wants to ride she says, 'Paul, bring my pony,' just as her father says, 'Pepito, black my shoes.' No later than this morning I heard her telling her father that she 'wanted' me all forenoon and when he denied her, 'Did you not give him to me?' she asked, precisely as though I were a piece of horse-flesh or a bit of furniture. Why in God's name do you think I have stayed on year after year, to endure taunts and slights and insults if not because——"

He ended by throwing out his arms in a helpless way, and then began hurriedly walking the floor.

"But this is worse than folly; it is insanity."

The young man turned upon him fiercely.

"Who more insane than the pride-blind father who allows such daily, almost hourly, intercourse? For ten years we have been as substance and shadow, she and I. I have served her, followed her, protected her, humored, obeyed, amused her; have heard her voice, known her inmost thoughts. Am I made of wood, does he think, or that I am a

boy? He has known my blood and parentage, yet there have been no barriers, no restraints, save of my own making. Had she been other than the child she is, despite her twenty years, had I not been what Edwin Allan's pupil must needs be, God alone knows what might have befallen."

"Ah, I have been much to blame in this," murmured the Rector, "I see how blind we have all been. Why have you remained?"

Paul laughed bitterly. "Because it was the request of him who, dying, left me the legacy of tainted blood, a tarnished name and a hopeless debt to Pierce Eldreth; because, while I was yet too young to understand, my mother refettered the chain that bound me here; because I, myself, gave him my maturer word to stay, one day when she had been half gracious to me. And so,—here—I—am, with no personality, with nothing to distinguish me from the horse-trainer, the sheep-tender, the stone-cutter; the semblance of a man, yet after all but one of the conveniences of this well-appointed estate."

He stopped in his walk before the chair of his teacher, his strong gaze fastened upon him.

"No, no, my father was not the most unfortunate of men, ill as was his fortune. For oh, believe me, they were wrong who said that the very worst use to which a man can be put is to hang him. That

is not the worst. A man may be a bonds slave in God's freest country; he may be manacled by the debts and sins of the dead; he may be weighted by the ball-and-chain of a master's malice, and, thus shackled, may be made the daily scorn of scorners. Add then a soul within him consumed with love for that master's only daughter, a love which, if ever wrung from him, would be spurned as insult—or, hold! does the wretch hunger? toss him the stone, indifference. Does he thirst? the gall of pity. Add but these, and what is mere death to such depths of misery? Pray, is it worse to *die* dishonored than to *live* dishonored? Tell me, Edwin Allan."

The Rector buried his face in his hands, groaning: "Ah, I see it all now. I have been to blame, greatly to blame."

There was a lengthened pause, during which the younger man stood with heaving chest, staring down at the drooping poppies in his hand. With a quick, passionate gesture he scattered them upon the carpet.

"But I am going away now."

"Why go when she starts in a week?"

"I am going for the week,—tomorrow, to-night yet. I have endured all I can."

"My brother will not consent. He himself goes to-night to attend the Stockmen's Association in

Denver next week. Ben is still laid up. Eldreth has the right to your time and services until you are twenty-one; you have given him the right. He will never consent."

"He must. He can not refuse me one week. I haven't had a day for two years, not since Bradley and I went to Ward prospecting. Ben wants me to take him to Idaho Springs for the baths. The Lower Ranch should be visited. I must get away on some plea. Help me, for I can not stay." And he passed his hand over his damp forehead in a helpless way quite unlike anything his teacher had ever observed in him.

"So you would break your thrice-pledged word for want of a little self-control? You would run away from your duties when you know how much rests upon you, duties no other can assume? Not the responsibilities of Eldhurst's management alone, but there are the schools which, with my other work, have outgrown my strength. You would go, when you know that if Eldreth makes the proposed cut in wages, either at the quarries or at the saw-mill, there will be trouble which only you or I can avert? You would leave your mother who each month grows more frail? You would go, thereby acknowledging your weakness, your want of reliance in the Strong Arm? I tell you such weakness is not remedied by flight. A coward never won a

victory. ‘*To him that overcometh*’ is the promise made. Be yourself, Paul,—stay, conquer!”

But the young man shook his head.

“You don’t know what you are asking, man. It may be weakness to go; it is madness to remain. She would be by my side, as she always is, and I, knowing there were but seven more days, I might—Let me tell you one incident. It is nothing to her discredit, for she is as innocent as a baby. Besides, we have grown up here together. A few days ago I was riding past the old orchard when she called me to come to her. I found her under a high-branching tree, trying to see how many eggs a certain nest contained of a bird she’d been watching. There was nothing about for her to stand on. I tried to pull the limb down, but still she could not see. She turned to me angrily. ‘Well, what are you standing there for, stupid!’ she cried, stamping her foot, ‘Lift me up, can’t you?’ I took her in my arms and held her while she prattled about the number of eggs and the color, and did I think there would be more or was Madame Robin sitting? and did I know any more legends about robin-red-breasts? What was I to her? A means to an end; a step-ladder would have served her as well; while to me—good God! and you talk of self-control—you, whose temperate blood flows evenly, who have dealt so long with the spirit that you’ve forgotten

what it is to be flesh and blood. I tell you again, you don't know what you are asking when you counsel me to stay. There's a limit," and again the unsteady hand across the forehead, as he turned toward the door.

But his teacher intercepted him. "There is another side to all this, and I must show it to you, whether you go or stay. What I am about to say will hurt, but neither of us has ever yet shrunk from a truth because it was painful. Let us suppose it possible that you win the love of Lilys Eldreth. What then? Whatever doubts you may have of your own strength, I, your master, do not fear that you will ever bring to woman 'that only woe which even love is powerless to console.' That is not in the realm of the possible. What then? Marriage. Now, I know Pierce Eldreth as few know him, his thorough worldliness, his inordinate pride, his unbounded ambition for his children. He would be unforgiving, inexorable. She would be disinherited, forever cut off and set adrift from her family and social moorings. All her life she has had ease, luxury, indulgences, high social position, attention from the exclusive circle within the select circle. These are the very air she breathes. Doubtless she would fling all away for the man of her choice, like any other loving woman, but afterward she would awake to find life without them unbear-

able. You might win wealth for her, give her ease, luxury and indulgences, your whole life and love. But—forgive me, Paul, you know that you are as dear to me as a son could be; but the world has distinctions; God knows you have found that bitterly true. For all you are worthy, her equal in all senses save one, yet to Pierce Eldreth and his world that one eclipses all the others. And remember, she has been bred in his world, has been saturated with his doctrine till she talks with his voice, sees with his eyes, has been so drilled in his creed that she can answer by rote. She is as proud as he, not so worldly because as yet inexperienced. But, supposing she yielded and united with one her social inferior, it is my solemn belief that very soon she would wake to deplore, and live to regret. Your world could not be made her world. She would be out of her native element. You could very quickly adjust yourself to hers, but not she to yours. Paul, dear lad, I have been unsparing, but have I not spoken truth?"

The young man was standing with his face turned away, one hand strongly clenched. It was only upon the repetition of the question that he said in a strained voice:

"Yes, your reasoning is right, but your supposition is inconceivable, absurd; so your fears are altogether groundless."

“But if you find you must stay, promise me, Paul——”

The pause was long and painful to both. Then the young man turned slowly, gave the other his hand through a speaking silence, and was gone.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DINNER AND DISCUSSION.

DINNER was ending at Eldhurst. Lilys had been merry throughout the meal, as fresh and lovely as the floral decorations, as sparkling as the rare wines served. John Howard, from the other end of the table, smiled upon her fondly and sadly; her father, absorbed as he was in his discussion with Lawyer Nolan, glanced at her from time to time with parental pride; while DeLacy took no pains to conceal his growing passion.

But Eldreth was chiefly immersed in his discussion, the subjects being those upon which he held pronounced opinions.

"You see," he was saying, "the walking delegate has heretofore had the good sense to keep away from Eldhurst, till this braying ass, Ingham, came. He keeps well out of my sight, for he knows what I think of his organization-for-the-working-man nonsense. I'll give him more than a hint if I get hold of him. Bradley inclines too much toward union views now, and he's too good a foreman to lose."

"Of course," returned the old Chorister smiling, "you or Nolan, either one, can outdo me in an argument, how then can I face the two of you? However, after listening to you, I am of my own humble opinion still. I believe in both the organization and the elevation of the laboring classes, else why would I be here? Nina gives her time to Allan's mission school up at the quarries and besides the church music, I sometimes go up to the mill to help young Baxter with his Sunday services. Ah, Pierce, if Edwin were here, he could present our side so well that I should have only to sit back and furnish the applause."

"Edwin and I have some spirited tilts," laughed Eldreth, "I won't venture who has the most broken lances up to date. But what does a book-worm and preacher know about handling such men as I have to deal with on the ranches, at the quarries and up in the pines? Better stick to his church and his school, in both of which, it's my opinion, he's wasting time. Both you and Edwin might be edifying large and fashionable congregations in Denver, judging from the 'calls' you've ignored, instead of casting pearls before these Swedes and Mexicans. You see," turning to the lawyer, "my mother, Emeline Huntington-Eldreth, was a devout church-woman, rest her soul! religious in the superlative, and fully persuaded that she had many miraculous

answers to prayer. She was great-great-granddaughter of Samuel Huntington of Connecticut, one of the signers of the Declaration, and nothing if not pious. One of her 'answers' was the preservation of my life through a fever; and she made my father promise her on her last bed that he would build a mission church here to commemorate my recovery, which she deemed a gift out of hand from the Lord Himself. She died in the East. My father kept his vow. No sooner was this raw land his, even before the house was completed, than up went the church, altar, organ and all, and the rectory, and Allan, then a struggling young New England preacher with missionary instincts, who must come west health-seeking, took the charge. After the quarries opened, and the village of tenant cottages was built for the men and their families, these added to the regular ranch-hands and the colony of Mexicans at the Lower Ranch, gave him a 'field,' where he's squandered time and talent ever since. And here must join him his college friend, Howard, who must bring his daughter with a voice that would grace a cathedral. I believe the three have had a school up in the Swedish village for the past few years, and some Y.M.C.A. dolt from Boulder goes up to the pines Sundays to amuse the mill-hands. Preaching and music are all right, harmless, help pass their time. But what I do not believe in is

educating them. The schools and the reading-rooms are emphatically out of place, and exist only by my tolerance. Education unfits them for their work, makes them discontented and restless. Where their ignorance is bliss, it's folly to make them otherwise. The less a man knows, the less he has to worry about."

"Education does not seem to have unfitted Paul for work," remarked Howard, "for I presume you class him along with the Mexicans and Swedes. Yet Ben has been laid up over six months of your busiest season, and I can't see but things move as smoothly under that boy's management, whether you are here or not."

"Ah, but there's everything in heredity," Eldreth reminded him, "Paul's mother was, is, an unusual woman for her station in life; uneducated, it is true, but strong-minded, high-spirited. She has gifted him with considerable executive ability, the fellow's chief value to me. Edwin, too, has done something, for him in the book line, but you know the saying 'An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy.'"

"Let me see," reflected Nolan, "isn't he the son of that headshepherd of yours, the man who met justice (or was it injustice?) at the hands of vigilantes some twenty years ago?"

"Oh, it was justice all right." And his host laughed grimly.

"I recollect the fellow. I was invariably called upon whenever you sent him down to Denver, to bail him out and head him back toward Boulder, getting his ticket and staying with him till the train moved. And this young man who drove me from the train this morning is his son? Oh no, he didn't introduce himself,—your men are too well trained for that; but I drew him out a bit on the way. Hu-m. . . m. And yet you believe in heredity, Eldreth?"

"Assuredly."

"But more in environment, surely, in view of this case."

"By no means. Heredity is the most powerful, the most inexorable of laws, as strong as its kin, evolution, as unfailing as—gravitation. It shapes a man, body and soul; it stamps the impress upon him, not merely of his father, but of his countless ancestors; it decides his ruling passions, his habits of life, his destiny itself. Like begets like. Attributes, physical, mental and moral, are transmitted generation after generation persistently. Look at the Rothschilds. It is not only wealth that they have inherited, but the ability of wealth-getting and of wealth-increasing. Take the Bach family: able musicians for more than two hundred years. And there are the Herschels, the Darwins, the Dumas', the Pitts—any number of families where marked characteristics have been 'handed down.' If other

cases are less marked, it is only because the distinguishing characteristics are less marked. Is there any better authority than that which says: 'When a man comes from his mother's womb, the gate of gifts closes behind him'? Could environment have suppressed star-gazing in the Herschels, or romancing in the Dumas', or statesmanship in the Pitts? On the other hand, is environment able to put even beet blood into a turnip?"

"I am not claiming that environment endows; but it may revolutionize. Birth may close the gate of gifts, but not that of opportunity. Heredity by no means fixes either character or destiny, else this son of a criminal may break law as well now as later, since 'that rash humor which his father gave him makes him forgetful,' and since he must break law, however envired. It is a fundamental law that every creature brings forth of its kind, but inherent tendencies merely give trend to character. The law of environment is as much a fixed law as is that of heredity. If this were not true, hope must die from the earth. As to the cases you cite, I say yes, most emphatically, environment might easily have turned the channel of talents mentioned or might have choked them outright. If your 'handing down' be so unvarying, why has the world seen no second Cromwell or Goethe? And what was there in the

ancestry of Robert Burns or our own Honest Abe to set them apart as unusual?"

"That is an easy one," smiled Eldreth, "A father may transmit to his son his ability for management, we will say, but neither his energy nor his application; or again, his musical talent, without patience and perseverance. Thus family traits often die out wholly or 'jump a generation.' But be sure it's all there, potent or latent; for as the sage has said, 'Every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.'"

"I'll grant all that and more. Your brainy man may mate with an inferior woman, and their child—well, I know you'll say a chain is no stronger than its weakest link; but I say their child's character and destiny depend upon a hundred trifles, the aggregate of which I call environment. Your brainy man and his low-caste woman may separate. Which one rears the child? Will not that question, rather than how they have gifted him, decide his character and destiny? Again, take the case of the young man, our driver. An inferior father and a somewhat superior mother, you say. Now, I'll not ask so much with what characteristics they have endowed him, as: Where has he lived? With whom associated? Who has taught him, and what? What of his work, reading, recreation? And last of all, is he disposed to make his own circumstances, to follow that nobleman Sidney's '*Aut viam inveniam*,

*aut faciam*'? '*Aut faciam!*' That is more potent, even, than environment. If circumstances may revolutionize hereditary tendencies, what may not will-power accomplish?"

"I'll answer that, lawyer-fashion, with a counter question: If mere surroundings, your hundred trifles, and your '*Aut faciam*' are so all-powerful, why did that great Catholic archbishop say, 'Give me the children of the land till they are five years of age and Protestants may have them ever after'? This is no argument for the power of heredity, but it is one against 'Man is maker of his own circumstances.' The wise archbishop meant anybody's children. But give him the children of Catholic parents and he'll not require five years. As to the fellow in question, it's all there—father, mother, grand-parents. He is a quotation from all his ancestors, and the quote-marks must come to light sooner or later. He hasn't lived his life out yet by some fifty years."

At this point DeLacy lifted his voice in a discussion of the four young people at the other end of the table:

"I appeal to your father, or to either of the other gentlemen. Is it not true that should Miss Lilys go—abroad, let us say, for voice-culture even for one year, ever after things would be different with her? She would view the world through a more

intense lens, and even a twelve months would broaden, enhance, alter her whole life?"

"There you have it, Eldreth," laughed the lawyer, "I couldn't have answered you as well. I'm certainly obliged to Mr. DeLacy for his opportune interruption. Look you. Upon the wag of your head, whether it be up and down or sidewise upon so small an act (one of my hundred trifles) depend your only daughter's future, the development of her talent, the sort of man she marries, her outlook upon life—that life itself. Are you convinced?"

"Far from it, my dear sir. For whether she spends her entire life in this country or in the island country of her ancestors, it is all one. Her talent was born in her; the man she chooses will be a fitting choice as (ahem!) were the selections of her foremothers; and her view of life is naturally, necessarily, through the ancestral lens, 'handed down.' Her environment whatsoever will leave essentials unchanged; for, again, it's all there—the whole long double line."

When the young people had delved again into their own themes, Howard said:

"You two have sidetracked wofully. We began by talking about educating the common people, elevating the masses. As to heredity and environment, I'm inclined to think you are both right.

Every child has the sacred right to be born well, and no man should die without having bent every circumstance to contribute to his utmost individual development. And after all, this is closely allied to our original subject. The masses have not, as a rule, enjoyed the sacred right of being well born. Shall we deny them, then, the right to such elevation as lies within us more fortunate to give them?"

"Bah, John," scoffed Eldreth, "much of this talk about elevating the masses is half-baked, misguided sentimentality. What does elevation of the lower class lead to, logically? The ultimate result is a universal mediocrity. Why? Because it is a leveling-down process as well as a building-up process. Is the earth's surface growing more uniform? Yes, but what the valleys gain the hills lose. The plains will rise in process of time, but it will be at the expense of the peaks."

"You mean that the average gain will be individual loss?"

"Precisely. Where once the world's history knew greatness in character, achievement, leadership, ambition, there will come a general lifting of the common people, from which, paradoxical as it sounds, the individual can not rise so high."

"He should be able to rise all the higher, and with more ease."

"Theoretically, yes; but the trouble will lie just

here: He will no longer care to. Socialism, we'll not talk about: it is part sentimentality, part lunacy. But socialism aside, it has always seemed to me that even democracy, fully realized, is death to individualism, in that it throttles achievement, stunts character, curbs leadership, kills ambition. Great Britain, not America, is the best ruled of earth's nations,—I mean best for humanity. Her history proves it. The monarchial idea is founded upon individual rule, which presupposes harmony, equilibrium, wisdom. All this talk about equality and majority rule is sheer nonsense. Majority-rule, the underlying idea of our republican form, is nothing more than mass-rule, yes, mob-rule, with now one party in the ascendancy, now another; now one set of principles, now another; now one gang of demagogues, now another. The result? Vacillation; impulse and instinct against reason; follies and crimes in the name of liberty; changes,—but not progress."

" 'In a multitude of counsellors there is safety.' "

"Never was more plausible life sent bellowing down the ages. Break a mob, and some of its component parts may be trustworthy. But the aggregate? What of the multitude that never counsels? Look at the commune of Paris. There's the one and sufficient answer to all democratic argument. America will soon be echoing the answer with char-

acteristic amendment. The age of majority but a score of years; naturalization criminally easy; here in Colorado and in a growing number of states, the idiocy of the other-sex franchise,—oh, we are sailing bravely toward the maelstrom.”

“But what will you do with ‘The greatest good to the greatest number’? That is not a plausible lie.”

“No; but equality will never accomplish it, nor mass-elevation, nor majority-rule. Men are not equal, can not be made so. The masses will always be mediocre, educate them as you may; and, as I said, such elevation as they will take must be at the expense of individualism, upon which alone depends human advancement. Nor will majority-rule bring great good to great numbers, for the average man is as incapable of self-government as a child. He must be ruled; his decisions made for him; his good accomplished by one—the individual, the leader, the thinker, the monarch. Why, your very religion, John, is monotheistic, or—and here I am uninformed—in the sacred precincts of the sweet hereafter, will decisions be handed over to a majority of the white-robed angelic? If so, I am more than ever resigned to be headed for that unlimited monarchy glimpsed us by Dante.”

“Papa,” broke in Lilys from over her cup of *café noir*, “was Dixie’s mamma so much handsomer

and brainier than my mamma? Mine was a graduate of Harvard Annex, and her people were real Mayflower passengers, first cabin, at that. Anyhow," laughingly, "he isn't so much better looking than I, even if the Boulder photographers do keep a continuous display of his last seventeen poses. Nor so much smarter, for all he has attended the State University and I only recited to Uncle Edwin. And don't Paul know ever and ever so much more than Dix and I together? Uncle says so; and Paul never went to school at all."

"Father will say we both get our brains and beauty from him, irrespective of our mothers," interpolated Richard, turning his dark handsome face toward the others.

"I should think you children could find subjects for disputes other than your respective mothers. Both were beautiful and extraordinary women, else I had not chosen them."

"Why, Eldreth, I didn't know you'd been married twice," said Nolan. "Your son and daughter look quite enough alike to have been born of the same mother."

His host frowned, shoved back his chair and arose as Lilys stood up.

"Yes," he lied smoothly, "the first Mrs. Eldreth was a Southern girl, who did not live long. She was a pronounced brunette, while Miss Allan, you

know, was a first-water blonde. Lilys gets her dark hair and eyes from my mother's side the house, though she does not much resemble the Huntingtons. But come into the veranda, gentlemen. The cigars, Richard. Miss Howard and Lilys will sing for us from the parlor."

## CHAPTER V.

## THE BOSS'S SON.

YOUNG Eldreth and DeLacy sought the far end of the veranda apart from the elder men, the one dropping into the hammock, the other leaning against a window which looked into the parlor.

Herbert DeLacy bore about him that self-assured air which accompanies social position and ample means, together with extreme worldliness. He was heavy-set, but his ease of motion might readily be taken for grace. His eyes were a nondescript gray and he used a monocle. His dark moustache was close-clipped, accentuating the red of a sensual mouth. His manner was pleasing, even winning, and among those of his own standing he won and held innumerable friends, particularly women. His magnetism, though purely animal, was his most powerful attractive force, a force against which "all men and some women" did not sufficiently account.

Richard Eldreth's was also an experienced face, though more youthful. "His years but young, but his experience old." And the character-lines of his

face were tell-tale to the knowing. To the unknowing, the young man was a continual puzzle. At the university his career had been marked by periods of alternate energy and indolence, of brilliancy in work and of rebellion against exertion. First it would be some class honors all but won, next his father must hasten to prevent expulsion and disgrace. One week he was a delight to those who loved him, the next their despair. Today he was the fastidious epicure, even in his worst habits, tomorrow his indulgences would be unnamable. Thus, to the unknowing, he was a singular combination of refinement and grossness.

Through with his studies, he would remain at home, apparently happy in the society of his sister and her best friend, Miss Howard, and there would be music, reading of the best books, elevating conversation. For he had a fine voice and a natural musical ability, which only his aversion to application had left uncultivated. This period of home-staying and the yielding to the higher attributes of his nature would last only so long; then he must plunge into the under side of the city's life, where for a corresponding period his extravagances, excesses and escapades made even his father gasp and wonder.

In appearance, he shared his mother's dark passionate beauty, though he did not resemble her.

He was always faultlessly attired and at perfect ease, whether clad in fancy knickers, golf stockings and Tam or in full evening-dress. He carried himself with an indolent, dandified air oddly at variance with his large, muscular frame.

“Come with me this evening, Bert, and I’ll furnish you a new sensation,” he was whispering, as the men settled themselves to their after-dinner cigars. “What the deuce do we care for their elevation-of-the-masses talk? And catch me going to church again. Once a week’s all I can stand, even if Nina and the Babe do sing. Come with me. Quarry Town’s rare fun, Sundays, when those clumsy, meaty, turkey-red Swedes would a-wooing go,—blue jumpers, horny hands, sweat and all. Gads! but don’t they scowl and mutter when I saunter up that way and stop to chat with their best girls. What was it they used to say when Cæsar approached? Well, up in Quarry Town it’s ‘Hide your wives and sweethearts; the Boss’s son is coming.’ And such girls, thick waists and dish-washy hands. A fellow with taste would run the other way ‘as far as God could furnish ground;’ and it would have to be pretty dark if he screwed his courage up to a kiss. But I’ve found one girl up there that I can talk to without shutting my eyes or forgetting my grammar; old Bradley’s daughter, Irish extraction, the prettiest mouth and neck you ever looked

at. Her 'steady,' Antonio, has recently been transferred up to the mill (praise the Lord!), comes down only Sundays. He is part Mexican, and if his eyes were daggers, I'd have been dead a dozen times."

"Best take care, old boy. Haven't you heard the saying: 'Vengeance is of the Mexicans'?"

"I may have to settle with him yet," laughed Richard, lighting another Egyptian. "I've been trying to get the governor to discharge him, but those things are left to the foreman, whom the half-breed takes pains to please, being anxious to hold his job. One Saturday night this spring they had a dance at Quarry Town hall, and I went up, though the honorable citizens are never out to welcome me, not in any great numbers. But I had fun enough for twenty-four hours. The Mexican didn't get down from the pines till late, and the way I was monopolizing his sweetheart was no dream, but a blood-stirring reality. Waltz? Sure; most as well as Edna Whitney. If the governor hadn't sent for me (some company here at the House) I'd be there yet, heart-to-heart. I say, Bert, let's go coax the little Bradley girl and one other to go down to Denver for a lark. I'll be generous and whack up with you—What? Nina Howard? Not on your life, son. She of the Titian hair and turquoise eyes and tranquil temper is the girl I am going to marry (to hear our papas tell it). Ha, ha! It would

be a mild sort of lark she'd go on—prohibition lemonade, with not too much lemon. Nope, there's another girl up there, recently from Chicago. She's pretty too. I have a hazy recollection of kissing her. She'll not turn you down; she's as anxious to be a 'lady' (!) as the Bradley girl is. I'll be generosity itself and give you your choice."

"One, two, three, four, five," enumerated DeLacy, "all since I've been here. You ought to move across the line into Utah, Dick, or secure for Eldhurst a special-grant on plurality of wives."

"Not I," grinned his companion, "nor singularity either, unless indeed I could emulate your noble example at continuous performance in the divorce courts."

"Humph! I don't know but I'd as soon figure as principal in a divorce suit as to be named as correspondent in one. Ahem! What did that little affair cost your angry papa last week, anyhow?"

"Shut up!" with an apprehensive glance toward the parlor. He let his cigarette go out in the succeeding pause, then came back to the present with a regretful sigh: "*But* it was almighty interesting while it lasted. Now I'll leave it to you (you ought to know) if it isn't 'cheaper to kiss other men's wives than to keep a wife for other men to kiss'—eh?"

DeLacy shook an admiring head. "What a

heathen you are! You never have made a specialty of resisting temptation, have you?"

"No more than you have. I say the best way to treat a temptation is to yield to it and get it out of the way. My fiancée is always prating about uprooting unholy desires, a method for supplying our needs that's about as sensible as amputating our fingers when we ask for rings. But you will come with me to the city?"

The other made a negative sign.

"Lord save us, he isn't growing virtuous?" sneered Eldreth.

DeLacy blew smoke-rings in slow flights. "Got to keep pretty straight before the 'governor' if I want to stand any show, don't I? Recollect what he said at dinner about the man she chooses being a fitting choice?"

"Oh, the governor's so straight himself. I've gotten onto a few things lately appertaining to the swift days of his youth; and his youth seems prolonging itself. He never preaches to me, bet your life. Didn't say a word last week when he had to put up to those damned blackmailers; and when I asked him if he didn't think her a beauty, he only laughed. Come on, for he'll never know. You'll get enough of the Babe, since she's going with your party in a week. Accept my sympathy if you're after a show in her direction. She's a spit-fire, I

tell you. That preacher's-sister mamma of hers must have been a joe-dandy for temper. Besides, you'll have to wait till she grows, or else take a kid to raise. Twenty? I believe she is—in years; but about fourteen in experience. She is green, under-ripe, undeveloped. You can tell that from her voice, her form, her actions. This minute she'd rather race ponies with Sam or go bug-hunting with Pepito than have you make love to her; and her idea of heavenly happiness is her swing in the summer-house with Paul to read her fairy tales. Why, she gets her last doll out every once in awhile, honest; and still has a secret hankering for Mellin's food. She doesn't know what love means. Up to date her kisses and hugs have been dealt out to her judiciously by the governor, her parson uncle and yours sincerely."

"I'd like to relieve you of the contract, all three of you," sighed DeLacy, turning the blind-slats till he had a good view of Lilys's girlish figure at the piano, "only I'm reasonably certain I shouldn't be judicious. Listen to that. Isn't that divine?" as the blending voices of the girls came to them from the parlor.

Eldreth's eyes glowed with gratified pride. "Why, there's nothing the matter with the contralto; there's a woman back of that. But Babe always sings love songs as though she were a dried

mummy, or as though love were a box of bon-bons done up with white ribbons and silver tongs. Poor Babe! She has much to learn."

The other waited till the song was ended, then announced: "No, Dick, I think I shall remain. These worthy guests of your father's will not stay the evening out, I take it?"

"Even if they don't, the governor and Lilys 'll have to have it out tonight. He hasn't told her yet that she's to go, else she wouldn't have been in such a May-time humor through the dinner. Look out for a March tempest when he does."

"Nonsense! you can't tell me a girl doesn't like a complete new outfit, trunks of pretty dresses, travel and all that. Don't I know girls? Got some little sisters of my own."

"Well, you don't know my little sister. She's a green-up when it comes to city ways. The governor was so afraid some Pleb might touch her dress-hem he wouldn't let her attend the public school; so afraid some chap might look at her, she mustn't go to university with me,—oh no! So she hasn't been off the place except a couple of winters in Denver since the governor's been in the House. and then she had a perfect relay of chaperones. She won't want to leave, and she's had her own way so long with every one from Ben down to Pepito that there's going to be a big storm with consider-

able lightning when she runs up against the governor's 'You've got to.' "

"You don't think he'd yield and let her stay?" anxiously.

His host laughed grimly. "You are not acquainted with the Honorable Pierce H. Eldreth, the member from Boulder, I see. You heard what he said in the carriage as we came home? Oh, she'll go; but I want to stand from under when they come together, that's all."

## CHAPTER VI.

## HIS FIANCEE.

THE two girls came out of the house. Lilys had a pair of scissors and began cutting a bouquet for her friend. As they passed about among the shrubbery, five pairs of admiring masculine eyes moved with them.

Nina Howard was older than her friend by three or four years, and taller by a head. Hers was a presence to be marked immediately in any assembly. Admiring glances always followed her. Her figure was perfection, her gowns of the quiet elegance of ultra-refinement, always harmonious, as now, from the tip of the jeweled aigrette in her picture-hat to the points of her aristocratic shoe. The double line of her Puritan ancestors looked from her clear eyes, and 'Gentlewoman' was written unmistakably over her person, manner and belongings. She bore an air of dignified reserve which melted in the presence of her father only. As to her betrothed, she was the one woman of his wide acquaintance of whom he stood at all in awe.

DeLacy looked reflectively at her as she stood letting Lilys fasten a cluster of white lilacs at

her breast, and it was the look of an appreciative connoisseur over a fine thoroughbred.

"Hu-m . . . m," he mused aloud, "I say, Dick, if I were in your shoes, said shoes wouldn't stray far from Eldhurst and such a figure as that."

"What in thunder are you talking about?" drawled Richard, busy with another cigarette; but when he traced the glance to its object, when he noted the sort of glance it was, he came to his feet with darkening face:

"You keep your damned eyes off her!"

DeLacy whistled his astonishment, but he dared not laugh. "I beg pardon. I . . . . ." he began.

But the other cut him short. "All right," he said curtly, "but she's not Edna Whitney, remember."

Then, as he saw Miss Howard about to draw on her gloves, he reached for his hat, threw away his cigarette and joined her. He was an inveterate smoker, but he never indulged while with her. He never asked to. No man would have asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Lilys was laughing, as he approached them, "I don't believe he's as bad as you paint him. Dixie here could be blind-folded and handcuffed and then teach him mischief. Dix is simply incorrigible, the very worst outside the Reform School, yet you won't hear a word against him, and never scold him yourself."

"My credulous little sister," exclaimed the young man as he appropriated Miss Howard's parasol and music-roll, "she does little else."

His betrothed sent him a reproachful glance, then, with an arm round Lilys as they moved toward the gate, concluded her interrupted remark:

"So, my dear girl, beware, for all I have surmised of him will prove true."

"What's she giving you, Babe? A sort of Gypsy's Warning against the dark-eyed stranger?" nodding toward DeLacy, who was coming slowly down toward the gate. "'Do not trust him, gentle lady, though his voice be low and sweet'? Much good, that. He's already got the governor's consent, and that's all that is necessary round this ranch. Wentworth 'll feel knocked out, and Nolan junior and some others I might mention; but then, monogamous marriages are the only lawful ones."

"Oh, Dix, do keep still about consents and marriages. It's fatiguing after a warm day. Uncle says I have years of study with him, and there are also several years of music if I do all Mr. Howard wants me to."

"That is right, dear," approved Miss Howard, "there's time enough for such grave decisions. One's girlhood is short enough at best."

"Now, Nina, don't be so superior," pouted Lilys; then, turning to DeLacy, "You are such a relief. Engaged people are intolerable, if you've noticed,"

"Yes, I've noticed. They are quite amusing; that is, the masculine half," with a sly glance toward his host.

But the thrust was momentarily lost, for Richard was looking at his fiancée as though he had never seen her before. "Such a figure," DeLacy had said, and by George, it was true; he hadn't half noticed heretofore. Now his practiced eye wandered over the undulating curves of her perfect form, noting the deep breast and the generous hips as contrasted with the slender liveness of his sister. Then, glancing up at his friend, his eyes betrayed the very look he had found so objectionable in that friend's. He smiled guiltily, but, recovering himself, closed the gate between the two couples and drew Miss Howard's hand through his arm, looking down at a certain *solitaire* on her finger with a thrilling sense of proprietorship. Her faultless toilets and unquestionable taste had always appealed to his æsthetic sense, a sense which in him almost supplanted the moral sense. The deep gratification he experienced in appearing in public with this perfectly-attired woman almost corresponded to the religious joy of the fanatic in the feast-day procession. She little dreamed how strong an ally was her French dressmaker in binding her lover to her side.

"I was thinking," he said musingly, in reply to

her inquiring glance as they descended the hill toward the church, "I was just wondering, you know, how it would feel."

"Are you talking of shooting the chutes or of smallpox?" smiled his fiancée.

"Of something more exhilarating than the one and more fatal than the other—even kisses. You favored Babe with three just now, one right after the other; I counted, and. . . ." He ended by pressing her arm warmly against his side.

The girl's manner chilled perceptibly. She withdrew her hand and occupied herself with a ringlet that threatened escape from the compact braid.

The young man shrugged his shoulders and walked on, whipping at thistle-tops with the point of her parasol.

"I think I'll ask you to excuse me from dozing through another of Allan's sermons," he remarked carelessly as they neared the church. "The Eldreth pew isn't nearly so comfortable as the hammock."

"Certainly," she replied coldly.

"I'll be down in time for your solo and to walk home, if I may; but I've got a straight two hours' letter-writing," he improvised glibly, "and I owe Bert some of my time, you know."

"Of course," she agreed frigidly.

They had reached the open door of the church. He placed her parasol and music in the vestry and

returned to where she stood withdrawing her gloves and gazing off toward the mountain rim, where prism rays flecked the western sky, paling the slender crescent of a youthful moon.

Very deftly and delicately he began helping with her gloves, smiling half inquiringly, half wistfully, into her expressionless face. He slipped the gloves into his own pocket with that same master-sense of ownership; and when she did not at once withdraw the hand he had bared, he moved imperceptibly nearer and nearer till he touched her side and stood looking down at her, his nostrils dilating with quickening breath. Suddenly he stooped and buried his face in the big bunch of lilacs on her breast, reveling, bee-like, among the blossoms.

She drew back, murmuring with a tinge of rebuke in her tone, "Do you want one?" and tried to disengage a spray.

But the perfume and her nearness had stirred his senses. All the wine he had drunk, all the blood in his body, seemed contending for a too small space in his head. He stood, his gaze fastened upon the redness of her sensitive mouth, while he moistened his own thirstily.

"I want more—much more," he said unsteadily, laying a heavy hand over the flowers.

She retreated beyond reach, speaking his name sharply.

He flushed, then laughed.

"Oh, hang it all, Nina, can't you be civil to a fellow when he's just got back, unkissed for two whole weeks. Come, let's walk awhile, away off there beyond the tennis court and through the old orchard, to where I had Pepito hang a hammock. We're just far enough from the organ there. The pipes sound like so many blending human voices. The pink and white of the orchard look like anchored clouds at sunset, and the perfume is ambrosia itself. And there are only the stars. Just an hour. You can be back in time for the closing anthem; and I'll promise not to be wholly idiotic. I'm sober; honest, I am. Come!"

But she remained as unresponsive as a statue. "Young People's meeting begins in ten minutes," she objected, without lifting her eyes from the watch she was consulting, "and the leader is inexperienced, so it is my duty to be here. And Lilys may not be in the choir this evening."

He stepped back without a word, lifted his hat with exaggerated courtesy, and turned away.

"Confound the girl!" he muttered savagely as he reascended the hill, "she has about as much red blood as a trout, and about as much passion as a paving-stone. Her 'DUTY'! What with her Young People's Meetings, her Mission Schools and Lord knows what all, how much of her time and

inclination am I to have for her wife's duty, I wonder. Well, I'll have a word then as to her time; and her inclination can go hang, once she's mine." He smiled meditatively, then sighed, then lighted a cigarette. "Oh, all right, Mlle. Icicle, Dickie knows who will go down to the nice becushioned hammock, so he does! The Spaniard sized it pat: 'If you can't get what you like, you must like what you can get.'"

## CHAPTER VII.

## FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

It was as Richard had predicted, a stormy scene between Lilys and her father that evening, and so depressing in its effects that the choir had to get along without its first soprano for the evening services.

Lawyer Nolan and Mr. Howard had taken their departure, and Richard had started on his tour as conquering hero through Quarry Town, when her father called her to come to him in the veranda.

DeLacy looked after her speculatively as she left him at the gate, his pulse increasing pleasurable as he marked the free ease of her fine body. Would it reconcile her to going if she knew something of his motive in getting her east? Such a child!

“ A rosebud set in little wilful thorns,  
And sweet as Western air could make her.”

The man were fortunate indeed who succeeded in awakening the girl-heart to the woman's. Both his natural and acquired knowledge of women taught

him that the deep, forceful nature of this girl had never been sounded; that no suggestion of passion had as yet penetrated to the sleeping heart. In this knowledge rested his strongest hope of winning her. He felt that when her whole untrammelled being should rise responsive to love's first sweet call, were that call from highest heaven or lowest hell, she would answer it, going all the way, if need be.

Lilys ran up the steps and to her father's knee. She was glad every one was gone—except Mr. DeLacy, who would “keep.” It was nice to be alone, they two, before poor Papa must go again. She thought politics horrid. A politician might as well have no home. She was very sorry for him; and she smoothed back his heavy hair with both hands and kissed him on the forehead.

He would miss the match game of tennis, Dix and Nina against Mr. DeLacy and herself, high stakes. He hadn't taken time to see her new sundial out by the summer-house, nor Royal's babies down at the stables, and the dear woolly puplets were playing everywhere. McCune had the roan filly ready for her; she guessed she'd take it next, with Bonita for the long climbs, since Bonita was so hill-wise. Her butterflies were progressing. Uncle said they would compare with the state house collection. Of course, Paul had done most of the

mounting, but she knew the classifications as well as he did. She and Nina were going to begin next week on the duets, Mr. Howard's music written to verses of her mamma's composition. When the Scott-DeLacy party was gone she meant to have Nellie and Fred Nolan and a few others, just a small house-party,—

But here her father managed to break in, and he at once told her of her eastern trip, a week from the morrow, with Mrs. Scott-DeLacy. She would have a dressmaker and whatever she wanted, of course. He had already spoken to Helene about all that. She would be gone the conservatory year, spending it with the very best of instructors.

The girl sat stunned and at first speechless. To go away from Eldhurst, from—everything! It was like dragging up the mountain pines by root. It was the breaking up of the old order of things in preparation for the new, the unknown. Vaguely she felt that things would never again be as now. The first crisis of her life was come. This was her first great sorrow, and it loomed large through the mist of her fears. It broke over her in a spring-torrent of strange emotions, and throwing her arms around his neck and hiding her face on his shoulder she wept.

Her tears spent, she pleaded not to go. How could she leave Eldhurst, the mountains, the beauti-

ful sunsets, her summer-house, her piano, Bonita and Rob and Royal? How could she live away for a whole year from him and Uncle and Dixie and Nina and Mamma Helene and . . . and . . . everybody?

After her plea and her kisses, she waited. He would certainly yield. Uncle would; Dix would; Helene would.

He did not think it necessary to repeat that she was going. He never had to repeat anything to any one else on the ranch. But noting that she waited, he repeated it, somewhat emphatically.

At that she sprang from his lap, the flash of her eyes fairly scorching her tears dry. She would see if she would go—be driven away against her wishes, just on account of her horrid old voice! Wasn't she practicing hours and hours every day with Mr. Howard just to please her father—hours when she'd rather be out on Bonita? And this was all the thanks she got. Oh, she'd see if she'd go, when she preferred to stay. The DeLacys, indeed! She'd thank them to attend to their own affairs.

Her father stared at her in amazement for an instant; repeated this statement that she was going exactly one week from the morrow on the noon train from Boulder, repeated it this time not somewhat, but very, emphatically; then, lighting a fresh cigar, began striding up and down the veranda, while

Lilys sat, dry-eyed and mute, in the far shadow of the wisteria.

Pierce Eldreth's wrath increased with his striding. That she should dare to oppose her will to his, *his!* She preferred to stay. No reason given. Well, he would see. She might as well learn right in the beginning who was master. Beginning? Of course it was. All the other little things in which he had allowed her to rule were trifles,—keeping Pepito or Paul from work for some whim or other, how much she need study or practice, and the like. But from now on, he'd speak to her just once, as he did to the others.

Paul certainly chose an unpropitious time to present his claim for a week's leave of absence; for it was at this moment that he approached the veranda, halted at the foot of the steps, in the broad white light of the hall chandelier and, hat in hand, made his plea respectfully, frankly, briefly. Ben was worse and wanted to go to Idaho Springs; he, Paul, would like to accompany him. He could stop at Spanish Bar and look into that placer matter, make those collections in Denver, and be back in a week.

His employer stopped on the top step, looked the suppliant from head to foot and gave utterance to one sweeping malediction comprehensive enough to include rheumatic foremen, placer matters and collections in general. Was Eldhurst going to the

devil, that there were insubordination and disorder and disobedience everywhere? How in the name of all that was torrid could he, Paul, go for a week if Ben were going, and he, Eldreth, leaving for Denver in the early morning to be gone till next Sunday? Certainly Ben could go to Idaho Springs, if not to the scorching below, and good riddance, but any fool could take him there, if he was so blanked helpless. There was all that alfalfa to re-stack. A nice mess Wagner's gang had made of it. Two dikes in the main ditch and one lock in the third lateral needed attention. Paul had better hire a competent ditch-rider or do the riding himself. The saw-mills must be visited and overhauled this week. They weren't turning out near their full capacity, and he'd promised the lumber for the Longmont coal-mines this next week. The quarries were the worst. Bradley must be growing childish to permit such shirking. Then they were not working out far enough north, either, where the ledge meets the drift. Paul had better spend a day up there this week; and while he was about it, he might as well check the pay-roll and books. And he would be good enough to go up there tonight and sound Bradley about Ingham. If they were going to organize one of their condemned unions, he, Eldreth, wanted to know it.

Then he could not go with Ben? The young

man's eyes were lifted steadily, eyes wherein fear had never cringed, nor a shade of servility. Their glances met and parried; neither fell, and the pause was stinging.

Go? No, sir, no. Let it end here. Had he not said what was to be done? Did he need it written out, or did he think he could recollect it? What? In ricks or in the sheds? He could use his own judgment, couldn't he, and not bother his employer with such trifles? Antonio? No, he could not. If Antonio Garia, or any one else on the place, didn't like his work, he knew what he could do: but so long as he was on the Eldhurst pay-roll, he'd work where he was put and no back talk. Webb was shorter-handed than Bradley. One thing more: Half a dozen gentlemen would return with him next Sunday for small shooting. He would go up to the Lodge and see that it was provisioned and in shape.

Paul heard him through in silence, the master-to-slave tone making him clench his hands and set his teeth. Eldreth stood frowningly regarding the fair, positive face. He liked the young fellow, despite his low lineage. Pierce Eldreth admired courage, and there were both courage and spirit behind those calm blue eyes that met his own so unflinchingly. In these little encounters with Paul, he always felt the grim satisfaction of hacking against true sword-steel. Again and again when he disci-

plined Richard, he had wished vaguely that his son were not so easily conquered. In the end, Richard usually went down thoroughly cowed before his anger; but this boy always had lightnings in his eyes and a smile on his lips that said as plainly as words, "I would not, except I willed to," just as he was smiling now. That little smile of Paul's, half serious, half amused, always stirred him to the verge of self-control; yet the sensation of meeting a spirit worthily antagonistic was really pleasurable.

Pierce Eldreth was a man of formidable dignity and repellant coldness, with whom only his daughter ventured to take little liberties. For the working-man, for the poor, for the wretched, for the failure in life, he had only scorn. Pity, leniency, even tolerance, were all but unknown to his haughty heart. Among his equals he was the loyal and generous friend; of his son and daughter he was both fond and proud, particularly of his handsome son, who was at once the pride of his heart and the thorn in his side; but with his inferiors and his employes whenever possible, through the foreman and sub—he was unbending, unsympathetic, dealing with them, foremen of his big ranches. Even with these mediators, he made himself as inapproachable, and I am afraid as disagreeable, as was in him,—as in the case of the young man now standing before him.

"Don't be in such a devil of a hurry to get off,"

he ended, turning away, "when I see fit to grant you a vacation, I'll inform you. Write to Ross of Denver about those collections. Write tonight."

"If that boy looked like Menendez or acted like Menendez, by the Lord, I'd not stand him a minute, useful or not useful," he muttered, resuming his walk as Paul turned away, "but he doesn't, nor like her either."

And Pierce Eldreth, knitting his brows, tried to bring his scheming, business-whelmed mind to consider for the passing moment whom Paul Menendez did resemble. But he gave it up, though half Eldhurst knew.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## PROVIDENCE PREVENTS.

WHEN Paul reached the Bradley porch, he found Ruth sitting in her low wooden rocker and some one was seated at her feet on the upper step, some one he could not recognize through the gloom.

"Good evening, Ruth," he said with lifted hat. "Is your father home? That you, Tonie?"

"No, it's . . . . it's Mr. Richard," explained the girl, hastily rising, "Father 'll be here in just a minute. Take a chair, Paul."

"Hello, Menendez," nodded Richard carelessly. "Thought you always went to church."

"Ruth promised to go with me," returned Paul, settling himself in the large rocker and depositing his hat on the floor beside him.

"Oh, did I?" giggled Ruth delightedly, "Your recollection's most awful good, looks to me."

Richard leaned back till he again rested against the girl's knees, and he slyly recaptured the hand that hung at her side away from their companion.

"Don't mind the Menendez kid; he's a joker," remarked Eldreth, somewhat nettled by Paul's cool

assurance. "You know we were talking of going for a walk just as he came up." And he pressed the plump hand he held.

Paul leaned back and clasped his hands behind his head. "Ruth is too polite to cancel a previous engagement, and I'm far too selfish to release her. Ah, there is the first bell."

Richard took out his cigarette-case and, rising, stood, feeling for a match. He was certain the girl would follow him to the gate. But something in Paul's face, dimly seen, restrained her. She went only part way down the walk, murmuring:

"I'm awful sorry, Mr. Richard, but I did promise."

"Red Cliff . . . eight tomorrow . . . Something to ask you," he whispered with a hand-pressure full of meaning.

"What would Antonio say?" asked Paul reproachfully, as she resumed her seat.

"Why should he care any more than—you?" she queried, peering wistfully at him through the gloom; then, noting the look of abstraction that had already crept into his eyes, she added, "And you don't care, not a little bit."

"Oh, yes, I do, little sister," he replied, "and if Richard Eldreth doesn't quit coming to Quarry Town like a thief by night, I'm going to inform one Michael Bradley. Eldreth has no business here."

"I ain't your sister," snapped the girl, "and for all you know the Boss sends him up here to keep an eye to the quarries. Guess he's studied geo—what do you call it? about rocks, as well as you have."

Paul smiled his flitting little smile. "If Mr. Richard Huntington Eldreth were under oath, he couldn't distinguish sandstone from sapolio. Ah, good evening, Bradley. May I have half an hour with you? You don't mind talking business on Sunday?"

So for more than an hour, the ranch foreman and the foreman of the quarries sat smoking wholly absorbed in affairs concerning the men, their work, the monthly output, freight rates, contracts, and lastly, Ingham and the union. When the younger man arose to go, the elder was saying:

"If the Boss thinks anybody else can get more work out of them Swedes and Irish, he's welcome to a new foreman. I ain't no nigger-driver. I've got the best crew-foremen I can pick, and every man-jack of them works full time. Myself ain't took a day off since you an' me located our hole up to Ward; an' from the way that hole's showin' up, you or me ought to be up there right now. As fer workin' funder north in the quarries, you know yourself how that hull ledge jest peters out. What's the use of foolin' time workin' through that truck?"

An' about Ingham: he'll be here tomorrow, an' if these here men want a union, I ain't the one to say no, you bet. Good Lord, Paul, we've got some rights, if we don't know much above drillin' an' blastin'."

"You certainly have, Bradley," agreed the other pacifically. "If the men wish to organize, well and good. This is a free country. I'll meet this man Ingham a moment in the morning when I come up. Better put about three teams on the north side tomorrow, work through that slant and see what's beyond. You know and I know that Mr. Eldreth has not been in the quarries in person for many months. You could not expect that. But I am here to represent him, since Ben cannot be, and while, personally, I prefer to take your judgment as to the direction for blasting, I see nothing for it but to carry out his orders to the letter; and this I must insist upon. Good night. I'll see you in the morning just before I open the office."

As he turned to go, he noticed for the first time, Ruth sitting in her little rocker, her hat on, and a hymn-book in her lap.

"My dear Ruth!" he exclaimed, conscience-stricken, "I do beg your pardon. We got to talking, you see and—But why did you not speak? Tell your father right here and now that I may never come again. I deserve just that."

"You came to see him anyhow, you know you did," she pouted, despite her father's presence.

"I'm afraid I did," he confessed, "Anyway it is too late for church now, and it is certainly my loss. A week from next Sunday for the morning service, if Antonio will not be down, and I'll steal some roses from Helene for you to wear."

"Don't want none of their old roses from up there," she said pettishly; but nevertheless, she followed him to the gate.

"Miss Lilys is goin' away, ain't she, for a whole year?" she asked, trying to catch his expression through the dark.

"I believe so," he answered coldly, closing the gate between them.

"And it's really true that she's promised to that Mr. DeLacy. He's asked her father. Hilma said Lena told her. Had you heard?"

"How should I? What business have you and I, Ruth, with affairs up at the House?' Good night," and he went abruptly.

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"If that was Dick Eldreth I met comin' away from here, I want it to be the last time, young lady," remarked her father severely, before he left her in the porch. "He's hangin' round Hilma Anderson, too, and a-lendin' her father money without interest. When fine gentlemen talk soft to girls

like you, they don't mean no good, unless they talk marry, which they never do. An' I'll settle him, if he is the Boss's son. You stick to your kind. Antonio's a good enough son-in-law fer me when you're old enough."

"Is Paul our kind?" asked Ruth archly.

"I should say not," growled her father, "but he wouldn't thank anybody to call him a gent, neither, 'cause he's a sight more'n that. Who was it got all our wages raised last time—all but his 'own? Who stayed here day and night when your ma died? An' whose money buried her, I bein' swamped jest then?"

But her question gave Michael Bradley an idea. His and Paul's mine up at Ward was a bonanza, if the expert's report meant anything, most as good as anything Ward had yet shown up. Paul was a straight, clean fellow, if his father had been a reprobate; Ruth was pretty; and why not just keep that mine in the family?

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*"Buenas tardes, Señorita hermosísima!"*

"My sakes, Tonie Garia, how you scart me! Dear me, don't be so rough. Sit down, can't you? How awful late you are. I might have been a-bed, or to church. I've had *two* fellows tonight, fine gentlemen, and both wanted me to go with them," and the girl tossed her pretty curly head, eyeing

her lover by the light of the lamp her father had left inside the door for her.

Antonio's black eyes glittered and his swarthy face flamed, as he pulled her fiercely from her little rocker to the porch bench beside him.

"I know who, for I met one of them as I rode up the hill just now. If Menendez is keeping me up at the mill for that reason, he's not the man I think him, that's all. I'm not a cutter; I'm a quarryman, and I belong here. As for the fine gentleman, if ever I catch Dick Eldreth inside this gate, if ever he touches the hem of your dress, I'll cut his dirty heart out. I came the cross-cut and round the old orchard, because of that bad culvert, and there he was with Hilma in the hammock back of the tennis court. And Pepito says he saw them once up at the old quarries. Isn't Swensson a damn fool to stand it? *Ah! que necio!* Murder? Sure. But you keep straight with me and there'll be no need. You are going to marry me, ME—*me comprende vd?*" shaking her roughly by both shoulders. "You've promised, and so has your father, and you'd best not play loose with me."

The girl, half-frightened, began to whimper, "Tonie, dear, you hurt. It's you I care for, you know." Whereupon Antonio's fierceness vanished, a melting look crept into his black eyes, his hands dropped from her shoulders to her waist and he drew her up against him, murmuring:

“There, there, poor little Ruthie. I’m a big rough bear beside you, but I love you so. *Yo no estoy enfadado*. There, do not weep, *mi alma*.”

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But when Ruth had put out her little lamp, some hours later, and crept into bed, it was not of Antonio’s black eyes and hot kisses she lay thinking, but of the blue eyes, the strong unbearded lips of Paul Menendez and of the flattering events of the evening. “My dear Ruth,” he had called her, and how sweetly he had said, “Oh, yes I do, little sister.” Did he care? Could he be made a little speck jealous? If she thought so, she’d go walking with Mr. Richard right past Marah’s when she knew Paul was home. Mr. Richard was good-looking too; he had held her hand and kissed it too, before they were interrupted. He had asked her what she wanted for her birthday when she’d told him it was next week, and she, after much coaxing, had told him a heart-bracelet. But now, after what her father and Antonio had said, she must tell him that he wouldn’t dare come there any more. But there was Red Cliff, and who would blame her for meeting him just this once? What could a poor girl do, who was denied company at home? Anyway, she must meet him somewhere to tell him about her father and her betrothed. Hilma would crow over her tomorrow; but she, Ruth, would take pains

to let her know that he had been to Bradley's first and that he took Hilma because he couldn't get her. Mr. Richard had said he thought her much prettier than Hilma, and Hilma should know that too. . . . Well, she'd go to Red Cliff just this once; no harm in that, with Tonie up at the mill.

## CHAPTER IX.

“SOMETHING DESPERATE.”

LILYS held her head very high when at last her father passed her on his way up stairs, and she vouched no word of good-night, though she knew he was to leave in the morning before the family was astir.

When she heard his room door close, she vented her long-nursed wrath by walking wildly up and down the porch, her arms flung out, her breath coming more and more quickly.

She was too much absorbed in her troubles to notice Paul when, returning to write the Denver collectors, he unlocked the office, the room which formed the L at the north end of the veranda. And she neither saw nor heard DeLacy—almost ran into his arms at the office end of the veranda, where the shadows were deepest.

She brought up short. He could not see her face distinctly, but he heard her panting breath and the sharp tap of her impatient foot and at once divined the cause of her agitation.

When she recognized him through the gloom,

she railed out at him as the cause of all her woes. She considered his over-persuasion of her father as outrageous, a breach of hospitality, shameful, unheard of; and if she was made to go as one of his party, she'd not speak to him all the way to Boston, nor ever again—so there!

He did not enter a protest nor attempt self-defense. It would have been more than futile; it would have been impossible. Expostulation, opposition in what form soever, would have been lost in the torrent of hysterical reproaches with which she deluged his devoted head. He took it calmly. He knew the sex; its little inconsistencies. He knew that in a short time, his "outrageous over-persuasion" must stand in its true light as proof of his growing passion for her.

So he waited till, exhausted, she flung herself against the railing near him. Then he began in a soft, reproachful tone:

"It is not possible that your brother was right, that you would rather continue your living burial here on this sequestered ranch than to go where pleasure and triumphs and the world's adoration await you? May I ask why you do not want to go?"

The breath quickened, the foot's tatoo increased.

"No, no, you may not. Because I don't—that's reason enough; and I won't; or if I go, if I'm

made to, I'll do something he'll be sorry for. Oh, I wish I could do something desperate, wicked—I only wish I could. And I will yet if he drives me away. He'll see!" and she flung her arms along the railing behind her, the very attitude of reckless abandon.

DeLacy drew nearer and began stroking one of her little clutched hands.

"It is a shame to send you so far," he soothed, struggling with an impulse to crush the mutinous little thing in his arms and stifle her with kisses, "There are conservatories nearer, and indeed I urged your own State Conservatory, which is high-class, I understand."

"Oh, he won't listen to Denver. It's been nothing but Boston, B-o-s-t-o-n, ever since he talked with that aunt of yours; and I hate her and her Boston and music and everything and everybody. Oh, he'll be sorry. I mean to do something; there's a week yet. He'll see."

His sympathetic fingers pressed round her vengeful little ball of a fist, and he came still nearer, lowering his voice:

"I have it. For a week Dick has been at me to go down to Denver. You come with us. There'll be theatres, the Overland races, the gardens and Manitou if you like. We'll have the time of our lives, and you can kill your bird with our stone. We can

dodge your father all right. He always puts up at the Brown. Will all this be wicked enough for you? If not, command me!"

The girl laughed, but her laugh was not mirthful.

"Good, fine. Dix shall take Nina, and we four will stay the whole week long; no practice, no studies, no dressmaker—nothing, only straight fun. We'll go on the same train with him; will board it just as it starts, and he can't help himself."

"You make me very happy," murmured the man, his other hand closing gently over her relaxing fingers, "how happy you know if you are not wholly blind. O little one, don't you know you are beautiful, glorious? *Dieu des Dieux!* Don't you know you are a full-blown woman, wasting voice and beauty and self in this desert? Why, you haven't the vaguest dream of what love is—love, the only thing that makes life worth while. And you were created to love, to be loved, to be desired, (devoured, I had almost said!); you were made to know life, the rapture, the heights, the depths. But we'll have at least one week of real living, even though after my aunt comes we'll see but little of one another, that is, alone. Be kind to me, little girl, and let me have you all to myself for one sweet, short week. Let's cut Dick and the other girl. Two is company. There's a train an hour earlier

than your father's. He'll not know. He'll think we are all in bed yet. And you can fix us up for horses. Now, if you mean what you say; if it isn't all a big Western bluff; if you really want to do something that will count, come with me alone. Chaperones are not necessities here in your free West. You Colorado girls can do things like that and still be proper of course. Never fear but I'll fix it up with your father afterward. Why, if we four went together for our little fling, he would merely laugh at you. What would that amount to?"

When he paused, she remained silent, and taking the silence as encouragement, he pressed his advantage.

"And listen: If you want revenge that would be revenge, make it Cheyenne instead of Denver. I happen to know that he hates the town. So that would be something like; only it will take nerve on your part. Come, I dare you!"

He could not see her face, near as he was; he could only divine her intent from the attempted withdrawal of her hand. He must not lose the advantage gained. With a sudden movement he crushed her close against him, whispering with his breath on her cheek, "Come! I can give you what you must have to be happy; what nature meant you should have when she made you——"

And at that exact instant the office door opened and a flood of light streamed out. The man leaped backward and began fumbling at the wisteria, and an awkward pause ensued.

Paul reached and extinguished the last of the hanging lamps, came out and closed the door behind him. He was a long time fastening it, the key in the lock making the only sound. None of the three moved or spoke for a full minute. Then Paul's even voice said:

"I beg your pardon, but before I go I must give you Mr. Allan's message, Lilys. He expects your herbarium completed before you leave. The mallows you lack are plentiful on the Lower Ranch road and there are a few of the sedges and ferns up the second right gulch of the cañon."

"Thank you," she replied in a low voice and moved away toward the open hall door.

But DeLacy, recovering himself, took a hasty, intercepting stride.

"Then it is settled—our arrangement?"

"And you had best secure them early, as the day promises to be showery."

Paul was on the first descending step of the veranda, the girl between the two men, and all three in the white light of the hall chandelier.

DeLacy saw her turn, as though by compulsion, and lift her eyes. With swift jealousy, he read

the anxious tenderness of the gaze that met and held hers; saw her quick flush answer that gaze. What her eyes said, he could only surmise, as her back was toward him.

"I will stop at the Rectory and tell Mr. Allan you'll bring them by noon." It was an affirmation, not a question. "Good-night."

Paul replaced his hat, took two downward steps, then stopped.

There was a commingling of unreadable emotions on the girl's face. She moved toward the veranda steps, hesitated, then turned slowly and entered the hall and paused with her hand on the banister.

DeLacy followed quickly. "Come, let us sing till Dick gets home. It is early yet," he said with studied nonchalance; then, under his breath, "You promised. I shall be waiting."

With a glance he could not interpret (it was scarcely fear) she went on up the long stairway, without looking back.

Deeply chagrined, he turned toward the parlor to await her possible return. But he was intercepted. With a bound, Paul Menendez confronted him, his hands clenched, his eyes narrowing.

"No, you'll not be waiting."

DeLacy was taken by surprise, but he deliberately put up his eye-glass and swept the coarse-clad fig-

ure up and down, and down and up, with a glance that was itself an insult.

"A . . . h, my good fellow," he drawled, "er . . . er . . . whom have I the honor? Oh, the coachman, I believe."

The "good fellow" went a shade whiter, but his tense attitude did not relax. Though the Easterner sensed danger in the pale face and steady eyes, he questioned with insolent bravado:

"Pray, what will the coachman do?"

The monocle came down and their eyes met. Stranger estimated stranger. Man measured man. Paul's hands unclosed and his lips trembled into a scornful smile.

"Nothing; for you will not be waiting."

DeLacy shrugged his shoulders. "There are other ways; other occasions."

Paul came closer. He spoke slowly, distinctly. "Get her alone, just once, or dare to put your vile hands on her again, and I'll break your head, you damned cur."

The other moved backward slightly, but he put a telling question, "What is she to you?"

Paul disdained reply, but to his deep vexation he felt the hot blood leap even to his hair.

DeLacy's short laugh spoke volumes. "So that's it. My Lady, who is so indifferent to her equals, chooses her paramour from among her father's

stablemen. Good! It'll be only a year, then he can have her again, when I'm through——"

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The man got to his feet slowly, back near the hall-tree, and stood swaying, one hand pressed over his mouth. The crushing grip on his left wrist served in a way to steady him, but the words spoken close to his ear sounded far off and fragmentary.

"Coward . . . liar," these he heard unmistakably, and . . . "harm a hair of her head . . . as we are both living men . . . . have your life for it . . . " and something more about the earth not being able to hide him.

## CHAPTER X.

## SCORES ACCUMULATE.

RICHARD returned to breakfast Monday morning decidedly unamiable, and that is putting it mildly. He was hungry and sleepy and disappointed. He had risen quite early for him, and all for nothing. He had peered round Red Cliff in time to catch a glimpse of Ruth walking back toward the quarries and beside her, Paul, the bridle of his horse over his arm.

These two had approached the Cliff from opposite directions and Richard, well-concealed, had waited, confident in the girl's tact to overcome so slight an obstacle to their tryst. It was with chagrin, therefore, that he saw the two walk away together; and he set down score number one against his father's foreman.

But he did not give up so easily. Straight through the main street of Quarry Town he marched, past the little red story-and-a-half cottages that were all alike, and straight up to Bradley's. But he did not stop; for there stood Paul, the quarry superintendent and a stranger, while

Ruth with her sewing was in the rocker near by. She did not lift her head, but he knew she saw him, for under his gaze the blood dyed her face and neck. After a few moments' chat at the gate across the street with Hilma (the recent arrival from Chicago and a contestant for Ruth's laurels as belle of the village) he returned home, in his heart setting down score number two against Paul.

At the House he found the reception-hall obstructed with packages, where a patient-looking woman waited; and DeLacy, up since dawn, pacing the breakfast room alone.

Helene opened the door. Would the gentlemen be served now or wait for Miss Lilys? Mr. Eldreth had been served and gone.

"Right now, old girl, I'm starving. And I hear Babe coming. I say, Bertie, I'm off for Denver, myself. That woman and those bundles in the hall mean dressmaking for a holy week, and the Babe will be in such a state of mind. You'll be glad to make your escape. I'll bring you back Saturday, fairly sober and in good time for the governor's gang and the pot-hunting. Your aunt will not be down till Monday morning."

"Dick," said his companion slowly, unfolding his napkin, "she's in love, I tell you. She may not know it herself yet, but I know it. I am acquainted with the eternal feminine from A to and-so-forth,

and then some, as you Westerners say. If she isn't, for one thing, why doesn't she want to go away?"

"And for another thing, why is she proof against your 120-in-the-shade love-making? Eh? In love! with whom, pray? The Parson, the bernards or her doll-baby? Rats! I thought you really knew girls, Bert."

"You'll see."

"See what?" laughed Lilys, entering and taking the place across table from him.

"The most beautiful woman in Colorado, whom all insist on miscalling 'Babe,'" promptly averred DeLacy, scanning her face greedily for a sign of self-consciousness at memory of last night's interview. But she was stifling a half yawn behind her napkin and was looking curiously at the still-red finger-marks on his left wrist. He turned his hand deftly back into his deep cuff and wondered if she had overheard the altercation at the foot of the stairs.

Richard was drinking his coffee gloomily. "You don't get much service these days out of your humble and one time devoted minion, Menendez, do you, Babe? He seems to be pretty damned busy with other people's business."

"Who is Men-en-dez?" questioned the alert DeLacy, quick to note the flush that mounted to the girl's black hair. He pronounced the name with the

buzzing "z" sound, instead of the soft, terminal "th."

"One of the hired men, cow-puncher, coachman, general roust-about."

"It's no such thing," flared his sister, "He is Papa's foreman and book-keeper."

"And keeper of the keys; a sort of trusty during good behavior. He's the son of a servant-girl, common-law wife of a cross-breed sheep-herder, Mexican peon, fugitive from justice." Richard was enjoying the sound of his own voice to the neglect of porter-house and omelette. Always voluble, his unstinted helping to "the governor's scotch" had further loosened his tongue. "You see, the governor took up the cause of Menendez senior (tender-hearted; we Eldreths all are!) and paid a sort of instalment ransom for the fellow because he was so sheep-wise. But the peon always went round on the skulk, the nature of the tribe, kind o' kept looking back over his shoulder. Well, one day he forgot to look, or was too drunk, and they (whoever 'they' were) got him. He was found next morning up the Cañon, swinging gracefully by the neck, and on his breast, in some Mexican lingo, was a warning to all his kind, treachery being named as one of his little failings. You may see the tree yet well up the Cañon, on the short-cut to the mill, —a big cottonwood, the Menendez *family tree*, if

you please, to which they point *without* pride. The execution limb is dead, and there are seven deep notches, the number of vigilantes, supposedly. That was some twenty years ago. His only son was a posthumous affair; he did not honor our planet with his presence until some weeks after his noble sire had swung off it. Born in a hut, bred on a horse, the infernal——”

“He is too well bred to swear before a lady,” interrupted his sister, “and Uncle says he has ten times your education. Who was it solved the problem given up by your whole class, the solution of which was afterward published in the University Herald *over your signature?*”

“Oh, sure. He’s a lexicon on legs, Socrates in the saddle, Heroditus on horseback, combined lightning calculator and Learned Blacksmith, special annotated edition bound in blonde calf. You should come up against him, Bertie; he seldom fails to leave his impression.”

DeLacy puzzled over the laughing glance the girl threw his way, but he pulled covertly at his left cuff and maintained a wise silence.

“As I was saying, this triple extract of all that is good and true and beautiful was bound out to us to help reimburse the governor for part of the ransom graft. He was raised on the place here, was turned over to the Babe and became a sort of gentle-

man of the bedchamber. Used to fasten your frocks and plait your hair, didn't he? Well, he naturally grew puffed up and officious, after the manner of inferiors with a little brief authority. I recollect once he came near giving me a thrashing; took virtuous spasms because I slapped Sis, whom he considered his special charge. We were kids \_\_\_\_\_"

" 'Once'! 'Nearly'! Oh, hear him," laughed Lilys, setting her cup down. "Why, he pounded you shamefully, though you were three years the older and much larger then; sat on you till I begged for you. I recollect how frightened I was because your nose bled so; also how many promises you made him before he would let you up. And that wasn't the first time nor the last time, either. How about the night you hired Shorty Anderson to help you whip him? What did—what didn't he do to both of you? Shorty lost half a month's work, and you weren't presentable for a week. And who always killed snakes for me? Who found me when I was lost that stormy night when you were afraid to join the searchers? If a boy teased me and I wanted him punished, to whom did I appeal, to Dix or to Paul? Oh, whatever else you may say, he is afraid of no one, not even of Papa. And it hasn't been so long ago that I heard him very bluntly inform Mr. Richard Eldreth that he, Paul Menendez, was

foreman of this ranch and that he would be greatly obliged if you would not try to countermand his orders. Didn't he, now, out in the south hay-fields?"

"Yes, he did, the impudent dog! And if he doesn't keep out of my way, I'll spoil that smooth face of his."

"You'll let me witness the 'spoiling,' won't you, Dix dear? And you'd enjoy it, too, I'm sure, wouldn't you, Mr. DeLacy?"

"Well, you'll witness it all right if he doesn't keep away from my little Irish girl. I've run up against him with her only three times within the last twenty-four hours."

Richard attacked his steak so assiduously that he failed to note the quick alteration in his sister's face; but DeLacy never once took his eyes from her.

"You see," ended Richard, "he is one of these elder brothers to dear, defenseless little girls, being, himself, absolutely pure—like Price's baking powder. He's the Parson's pet, the white-cross, Frances E. Willard brand; none genuine without 'Meddler' blown in the bottle."

"But Ruth is engaged to be married to Antonio Garia," faltered Lilys.

"And there is another fellow who's going to have his beauty marred," remarked her brother.

The three quitted the breakfast-room for the

front veranda. The morning was gray with a hint of moisture. The carriage stood at the block and men were coming and going from the office, through the open door of which Paul could be seen at his desk. Lilys followed her brother to the hammock at the far end of the veranda.

"Dixie," she began in an undertone, "I don't want you to leave me alone with Bert DeLacy ever again. Uncle Edwin wouldn't at all like the way he talked to me last night. I do not know half he means, but he almost kissed me—and his mouth is so big and wet—*ugh!*" And with her handkerchief she rubbed vigorously at her left cheek.

Her brother sent up a whoop of laughter. He turned as he lounged into the hammock and beckoned DeLacy, dropping one eyelid jocosely.

"Bert, me son, line up here and face your fair accuser. Sir, this forlorn damsel is turbulent in spirit for the very sufficient reason that you undertook an osculatory application last night and you didn't finish the job. She also wants an expurgated reproduction of the josh you were giving her when you made your attempt,—expurgated, mind you! She appeals to my honorable self. Now, Mr. Herbert Scott-DeLacy, shall it be pistols or the poker-deck?"

The face of the accused was a study in purple.

"If only Miss Lilys had stayed to hear my plea

for forgiveness," he murmured abjectly, "She makes no allowance for her beauty and power, nor for man's peculiar weakness. Surely I have been punished, knowing her displeasure."

The girl ignored him and pressed closer to the hammock as though to make a further appeal, but her brother cut her short.

"A . . . w! come off! Thunderation, Babe, what an infernal racket about a kiss or two. Pity you hadn't the sense you were born with. Bert's a fool not to cut you for Edna Whitney or some other full-grown woman. Run away and play with your dollie now; don't you see brother's busy?" And he stretched himself luxuriantly in the hammock and reached for his *Police Gazette*.

Lilys whirled about, snatched up her riding skirt and whip from a chair and her little heels fairly clicked as she stalked straight down the porch. De-Lacy started to follow, but stopped, swearing eloquently under his breath, as he saw her enter the open door of the office. Richard kicked out at him, chuckling gleefully.

"There, let her go tell her troubles to the hired man. He can't any more than knock you down; law against murder even out here in Colorado. Besides, he'll be too busy playing Mother Winslow. They'll be out in the back yard pretty soon making mud-pies. Now will you be good and go with me? Or are mud-pies more to your taste?"

His companion shook his head pensively.

"No use trying to hide it; I'm certainly in love this time *au sérieux*. I don't like to leave; I'm afraid for my chances. Dick, you don't any of you seem to realize that girl's possibilities, nor how near she is to their full blossoming. She's going to make a magnificent, a wonderful woman, with her thrilling nerves, her passionate senses. And *how* she will love! How she will go to pieces at the feet of her hero, and love and love and love him; enough to satisfy a Don Juan——"

"Or a DeLacy. Permit me to add that he will never die of *ennui*, thanks to her lightning-change moods and her rapid-transit temper. Numbers One and Two and even Three will be amply avenged."

DeLacy laughed. "I'd damned well like the chance to avenge them that way. Well, whoever he is, he'll have to make that honeymoon his exclusive business or quit the country, for she'll brook neither rivals nor neglect. But just now she's asleep, dreaming."

"Get busy then, Bluebeard, and wake her. My fraternal duties don't extend to the call-me-early act. I've a Galatea of my own. Besides, what are you here for?"

"You may search me," sighed the other. "Why, I've talked to that girl as I never talked to woman

before, but she's asleep, I tell you, or else there's some other man. The other night we were at the piano, lights down, and we were alone. I had been singing 'Answer,' you know the song:

'Until into your eyes I gazed and knew  
My search was o'er.'

I told her I felt that my search through earth's multitudes for my affinity was ended here in this beautiful West, where I had looked into her lovely eyes—Oh, hang it all, Dick, you know what damfool stuff a fellow has to talk; they will have it. Well, she dropped her eyes, then turned and looked from the window, while I leaned over, fairly holding my breath for her next words. I waited till the trainer passed the window with an unruly horse, then she looked up into my face with a sweet smile and I'm condemned if she didn't ask me which I preferred for breaking a colt, the scissor-bits or the long curb!"

Richard choked back his laugh and offered his cigarette-case by way of sympathy.

"But it will come, the awakening, and that's why I don't want to go away; I don't want to miss anything. Dick, Dick, I know what a woman like her could give to a man if she cared, and I'd give my hopes of heaven, if I have any, to make her care."

His companion sat up and leaning, spoke confidentially:

"You needn't lose sleep, Bert. Listen: I'll give you a straight tip. The governor's set on the match; he told me so. And that means that whether she cares or not, whether she's asleep or awake, she'll end by becoming Mrs. DeLacy Number Four (or will it be Five?" this with a malicious twinkle). "You've visited here enough to know that what Eldreth senior says goes. She hates lessons and the piano, but she studies and practices; she doesn't want her voice trained, but it'll be trained. The Howard girl and I bore each other to extinction, but it will end in a wedding, see if it doesn't. When you and Mrs. Four visit Eldhurst, ten years hence, I'll be the model father of half a dozen little red-heads,—sure. The governor's It at this ranch; no X-rays needed to see that. Babe's bound to give in, sooner or later; it's the only way. So whether you go or stay this week will make no difference. And besides, man, aren't you going to have a year of her? Can't you wait a week? Most men are April when they woo, but you—by the great horned spoon—you are the middle of August, real dog-days."

DeLacy sighed dejectedly and puffed at his cigarette in silence for some minutes.

"Dick," he said presently, "I once knew a girl in Boston, beautiful, rich, dead swell, and by George,

if she didn't elope with one of her father's grooms! Those mesalliances are happenings of real life—"

"Well, her father wasn't master of Eldhurst, else there'd have been a hurry-up job for the undertaker, with coffins for two, see? You're borrowing trouble. Cut it out, I tell you. Don't be an ass. Come, how about the city?"

"But you've only one girl."

"Only one, thanks to the meddling hired man. I ventured to approach my Galatea about a visit to the city just for pleasure, but she would not think of going on such an outing, no indeed, not prim Mlle. Nina of Prudeville. She couldn't leave the dear dirty little Mexicans and Swedes of the mission school,—her Duty, with full size, upper-case D. She wouldn't, couldn't deceive her poor kind old father; she wished I had more respect for her than to hint such a thing, dearly as she loves me. And she turned her big reproachful eyes on me, forty-candle power. How could I ask it? how could I? how could I? She kept saying it over and over, like a blasted phonograph with nothing else in its vocabulary."

It was DeLacy's turn to suppress unseemly mirth.

"I'd like to say something about your fiancée unless, of course, it's as dangerous to talk of her as it is to look at her."

Eldreth smoked vigorously for a minute.

"My God, I'd like to hire some one to berate her, since it seems I can't. So fire away."

"This is no berating. It is only that if I've read her aright her surrender was made, even to the right man, with a distinct reservation; while your sister's, to the right man, will be unconditional, unquestioning. Miss Howard resembles not a little your far-famed Colorado weather: nine months winter and three months mighty late in the fall."

Richard laughed grimly.

"More reservation than surrender. If you'd witnessed our parting last night—boreal, icy, glacial, b. . . oo. . . oo! But she kissed and made up with her wandering boy, let him stay till ten-thirty, sharp, half an hour longer than usual; and at parting said she'd pray for me—hanged if she didn't, Bertie!"

"Then you're not going?"

"Who said I wasn't? My feminine acquaintance isn't limited to Boulder county. What's the matter with the Whitney girls? And the Blue Bell Burlesque Company's at the New Curtis for the summer. What's wrong with the little bleached blonde chorus girls? Ever know one of them to complain because a fellow *nearly* kissed her? Now, here's another tip. Even if you stayed now and kept every commandment, you'd not get Babe alone for five minutes. I know what I'm talking about."

His companion flushed causelessly and glanced resentfully toward the office. "All right, Dick, I'll go you. 'We are called away on particular business and we leave our characters behind us.' But you'll have to make it worth my while; you'll have to lead me into temptation to some extent—brimming buckets of red paint and whole flagons of forgetfulness."

"Oh, trust your Uncle Dickie for the jag of joy. Ye gods! but I feel like doing it up good and plenty and then some. If I stay here another twenty-four hours, Nina will have me distributing tracts and singing 'Why Do You Wait, Dear Brother?' It's that noon train or suicide. I'm low in spirits and laudanum's cheap. Now I've got to be gone for awhile, but we'll make our train O. K. The carriage is ordered for it, 'cause I had a sneaking idea that I'd not go by myself. You'll have time to patch it up with the Babe and get that God-forsaken look rubbed off. I've got to see about a horse. Heigh you, Sam! Bring up Hector to the cart. Come, get a jump on you," looking at his watch.

The stable-boy stopped and touched his cap.

"Hector's double-harnessed for the field, sir."

"The devil he is! Well, you know how to unharness, don't you?"

"I dunno about it," hesitated the boy, his fingers fumbling his hair, "I'd—you see, I'd have to ask Menendez first, sir."

"Be damned if you do! You have that cart at the block by time I'm down stairs or you'll be hunting a job. See?"

The boy paled to a dirty yellow and gulped twice, but he shook his head.

"I jus' wouldn't dare to. Hector an' Hebe's ready to hook to the hayrack. An' besides, I had the strictest kind of orders not to let no horses out of the stables this mornin' 'cept them as took Mr. Eldreth to the train, an' I don't know how long the order is f'r,—not till Menendez says, you know."

"Men-en-dez seems to be much in evidence at Eldhurst," sneered DeLacy.

Richard came to his feet with an ugly oath.

"I'll see about this," he glowered.

And he too entered the office.

## CHAPTER XI.

## MASTER.

WHEN the master of Eldhurst was absent, it was Paul's custom to spend part of each Monday forenoon in the office attending to the accumulated correspondence, answering questions and giving directions.

The office of Eldhurst, as has been said, was a large northwest room on the ground floor, forming the L of the long west veranda, with both an outer and an inner entrance. It had a large bookcase, two roll-top desks, a safe, a typewriter, a letter-press and other office fittings; and a low railing divided the room, giving the back part semi-privacy.

On the walls, besides maps of state and county and pictures of fast horses and pedigreed dogs, hung a large map of Eldhurst itself, showing the Upper and the Lower Ranch, portions under cultivation, every ditch and sub-waterway, the roads, the quarries, old and new, the Swedish village, the House, the rectory, the Howard mansion, the church, and even the scattered tenant houses.

Paul sat at the largest of the desks, which was

covered with an orderly array of papers. He was writing, his hat pulled low over his eyes. A boy from the lumber camp was outside the railing, waiting to take a letter to Webb, the mill superintendent. In front of the house William stood at the heads of the restless sorrels, and Sam was tying Bayonne, Paul's saddle horse.

Lilys entered and came through the railing-gate. She carried her riding habit and was still walking emphatically.

Paul arose as she entered, removing his hat, and without looking directly at her, asked how he might serve her.

She would want Bonita by and by, she said; no hurry.

At the moment Pepito came in. Would he bring Miss Eldreth's pony, his foreman asked, saddle the roan three-year-old for the new ditch-rider and then prepare to accompany Ben to Idaho?

Paul sat down and continued writing. Lilys also seated herself near the railing, picking up a Denver paper and holding a long-stemmed "Hermosa" rose against her lips.

The inner door opened and Lena, the maid's head appeared. The dressmaker was ready to fit those linings. Lilys looked up impatiently. Wasn't she to have a moment free from that woman? "But, please," began Lena, whereupon the mistress

stamped her foot petulantly and the maid vanished.

Outside the railing half score of men had by this time assembled. Paul wrote steadily, sealed half a dozen letters, and then passed through the railing-gate. Lilys idly listened while he rapidly disposed of the men.

Here was the letter for Webb. Paul would be up to the mill later in the week.

This was the new ditch-rider? And the young foreman extended his hand with a winning cordiality. All right about the recommendations. Wagner, under whom he would work more directly, knew of his experience, and that was sufficient. His horse was ready; the stable boy would accompany him and he, Paul, would overtake him at some point during the forenoon.

Here was a note for Luis. Sheep-dipping would begin at once. He would be at the lower Ranch Saturday night.

Here was the mail for Boulder, part of it. William would return at once, as Mr. DeLacy and Mr. Eldreth wished to catch the noon train for Denver.

Next the horse-trainer. How was the black mare's shoulder? And there would of course be Mr. Eldreth's Brownie to exercise.

Sam would take Ben and Pepito to town, but not until more mail was ready.

And now, Wagner, that alfalfa. Yes, in the

sheds, and all the extra men and horses must be used, as the clouds threatened. In doubling for the haul to the baler, he would of course put Hector and Hebe in the lead, since they were too light for wheelers. Three hours' earnest work should clean up the east field.

One after another the men departed, and the foreman turned back to his desk. As Wagner reached the door, Richard was entering and detained him in a whispered conference. The sub-foreman hesitated, then shook his head.

"Can't do it, Mr. Richard. Orders is orders. Besides, Hebe won't work on the off side, and even if she would, the black mare's shoulder's too bum to put in."

"But I want Hector, I tell you. He's the only decent one for the cart. Where are all the horses, anyway?"

"Nothin' in from the range fit f'r doublin'," hesitated Wagner.

"You'll have to use the sorrels, then."

"O Lord! they'd kill their fool selves. No, sir, I'm here to do 's I'm told. If Paul says the sorrels, why the sorrels goes; but it 'll mean slower work, an' it's a run agin the rain now, with all that hay down," edging toward the door.

"Well, I'm going to have Hector for an hour," determinedly.

Wagner raised his voice. "Paul."

"Yes?"

"Excuse me, but Mr. Richard wants Hector right away an hour. How about it?"

Paul considered, a shadow of annoyance touching his brow. Richard's face reddened angrily; and Wagner took advantage of the pause to repeat that the mare's shoulder was pretty sore yet; that the sorrels were only carriage-horses and mighty dog-gone flighty, and that the new hay-racks were too much for one team on the up-hill haul.

Paul silenced him mid-way to say decisively:

"I'm sorry, Richard, but you'll have to use Brownie. Tell the trainer to bring her up, Sam, to the cart."

Eldreth ground an oath of protest between his teeth. "She won't stand without a groom—" he began.

"You've not a moment to waste, Wagner," observed Paul, "I'll be with you in less than an hour."

"Hector and Hebe in the lead, sir?"

"Certainly."

"You try it, Jim Wagner," blustered the master's son, "and we'll see how long you—"

The sub-foreman nodded to Paul and disappeared. Paul picked up his pen.

"Damn it all! What do you mean?" threatened Richard, striding through the gate and up to the foreman's desk.

The other lifted his strong, unwavering gaze to the flashing eyes above him. "That the most urgent business of Eldhurst must not be delayed for a mere whim, and that my orders are not to be questioned," he returned quietly.

Before the reply came, the door swung and Nina Howard appeared. Richard whirled upon her fiercely.

"What are *you* doing—*here*?"

She colored at the tone and the emphasis, and replied with a touch of haughtiness: "I came to see Paul."

"Well, you can't see him. This is the hired man's busy day."

"Was there something special, Miss Howard?" asked Paul rising.

"N . . o, only about the problem young Hansen couldn't solve, and," laughing embarrassedly, "I couldn't solve it either, that is, not by substitution."

"You come with me," commanded her betrothed, turning toward the door, as he took the book from her hand, "I've worked through equations, myself."

"I will come to the school-room half an hour early this evening," Paul assured her, bending, presumably to conceal a smile; but the smile faded, as Richard's parting remark came back through the door, something about giving a low dirty Greaser so much authority to abuse.

With Richards' and Nina's departure, the room was cleared. For some time the strokes of Paul's pen were the only sounds; then he sealed and tossed aside his letters, leaned back and pushed up his heavy hair with a sigh of relief.

Lilys laid aside her paper and stood up.

"Well, Mr. Busy Foreman," she laughed, "are we ready at last for the mallows and the sedges and the ferns?"

The young man half turned in his chair.

"I do hope you have not been waiting for me," he murmured, "You have seen how my time must be spent to-day with your father away."

The girl's cheeks flamed.

"And you have dared to keep me waiting all this time, along with the hirelings,—ME! You knew very well that I expected you to go up the Cañon to get my specimens."

"You said nothing about my going anywhere, believe me," he expostulated gently. "Sam can accompany you, or—"

"Sam, indeed! I'll not go a step."

Pepito thrust his face in at the door. "O. K., according to orders," he announced.

Paul arose. "Put Bonita back in her stall, then go help Ben get ready."

The door closed promptly.

Paul rolled down the top of his desk, tested the

fastening, then turned toward the door. Lilys sprang to confront him, her eyes glittering, the butt of her riding-whip upraised.

"Who told you to order my horse put away?" she choked. "Who is master of Eldhurst, anyway?"

"I am—just now." The tone was low and even, but the *master* spoke in attitude, tone, eyes. He had caught her uplifted arm and was holding her gaze no less firmly. Often in their early childhood she had struck him in her blind anger, but now—he was pale, and there was a look in his eyes she had never seen there, a look that made her own waver and drop, just as her brother's had wavered and dropped.

Silence then. He had not relinquished his hold upon her arm, but as her hand sank nerveless, his grasp relaxed and his fingers clung in almost a caress. His gaze lingered sadly over the features he knew so well: the full curve of throat and cheek, the creamy ivory of the skin, the black fringe of lashes, the vivid lips, passionately proud.

They were his only farewell, that lingering clasp of her arm, that slow scanning of the loved face. His breath came with difficulty; he was striving hard for self-mastery.

Pulling away, the girl measured him disdainfully

for one stinging instant, then left the room, her haughty head high.

And the busy young foreman took a precious moment to stoop for a long-stemmed rose that lay crushed and dusty at his feet.

## CHAPTER XII.

“NONE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE.”

LILYS locked herself in her own room, went down at the window and, cheeks in palms, stared straight before her. She saw Paul come out, mount Bayonne and ride away toward the hayfields. She wondered in a dazed way why she was not with him, as she had intended being; wondered why she had been turned from her purpose.

She saw the carriage return from town and remain at the hitching block for its second trip. She had not changed her position when the cart came plunging up the hill from the old quarries road, Brownie's harness, every strap and string of it, lather-lined, and Richard half standing in the cart, sawing on her wide-open mouth. They brought up at the block, the mare on her haunches in a tangle of trappings and fly-net, so that William had to go to the rescue, getting a sound cursing for his slowness. Then there were more oaths and shoutings for Sam to come get the blanked fool of a horse.

The girl at the window was still staring into space when the rat-tat-tat sounded on her door and

her brother's voice announced that he and Bertie were off. She did not answer nor turn. She saw them go down to the carriage, suit-cases in hand. Both smiled up with lifted hats, and her brother kissed his fingers; but she drew sulkily behind the curtain and resumed her position only after the carriage was well past the Rectory.

The shower came and sighed and whispered ceaselessly amid the great trees about the House. Her window grayed and ran with rain-pearls, cleared and grew bright again. The clouds and the morning passed, and still she sat with tumultuous breast and clenched hands and anger-blind eyes, impervious to the inviting smile of the now sunny sky. A red bird tilted upon the vine outside her window, his little throat swelling as he spent his ecstasy; but she did not hear him. The rain-freshened breeze touched her hot cheeks suggestingly, but she did not feel it.

Paul rode in from his work. He looked warm and tired as he swung down, but he drew his horse into the shade of the big locust tree, loosened the broad double cinches and eased the heavy Mexican saddle before he tossed his hat to the ground and, facing the slight wind, wiped his forehead.

Sam came running from the stables, touching his cap, and led away the reluctant horse, Bayonne looking back and "talking" to his master all the way to the barn.

Sam had not touched his cap to Dixie, nor had he come for Brownie without much profane shouting. One would think that Uncle Edwin was right, that the son of Manuel Menendez was a born gentleman, judging from the way heads were bared and feet came at his beck and call; when in reality he was but a hireling, one of her father's servants, like Wagner and Webb and Max.

Of course the men obeyed him, younger though he was than most of them; and it was small wonder—that look on his face as he had that morning declared himself master of Eldhurst! She was trembling still from anger over it. Yet with her wrath there mingled something of her father's satisfaction of striking against true metal, and that keener, subtler satisfaction of the strongly sexed woman dominated by a masterful man. Not that she recognized either source of her pleasurable sensations. She was anything but self-analytic. She recognized her anger—that was all; that was enough.

And in that anger, she delighted to style him a sort of upper servant, because to her creed, fostered by pride, prejudice and education, there was no middle ground between the high and low. There were only the two classes—the elect and the socially damned. Were you of the elect? That depended upon how many generations you had known your forefathers and how many figures it required to foot

your bank balance. Were you a social outcast? Yes, if you worked and were grimy and sweaty and hideous, and knew not your fathers, and had to be identified at the bank.

Thus, her classifications were simple, all-inclusive and time-saving. Just as Wagner was the best irrigationist, Swenssen the prize drill-hand, and Sam the finest horseman on the place; so Paul, being somewhat educated, was the most capable of managing during the master's absence, and in addition he was perhaps the most entertaining when she, the master's daughter, was bored.

So, to the left with them, all of them, to the shady left, where she parted the luckless goats from the heaven-favored sheep upon the right hand. And between the two groups were social barriers as inexorable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians, a great gulf which none of the luckless dared cross—not one. Thus had her father taught her by precept and example; thus had it been; thus should it ever be. And nothing, no one, had ever made her, Lilys Eldreth, born to the purple, forget who she was and to what station in life it had pleased God to call her.

And yet . . . . .

Paul was seated on a step of the horse-block now. Against the massed background of locust leaves, his profile showed clear-cut and fine. . . . . He had

not so much as once looked up at what he knew was her window, but sat, pushing up his heavy hair to the cooling breeze and looking off toward the gardens to the south.

Ah, she could see now. Ruth Bradley was coming from the gardens, basket in hand. She was far off as yet, but running ahead of her and quite near, came a mite of a girl, one of the children of the Swedish village, with yellow curls flying and small round face all aglow with anticipation.

Straight it ran into Paul's down-reached arms, lifting a berry-stained mouth for his kiss. But the young man was holding her laughingly at arm's length, was protesting against the berry-stains, evidently, for rising, he swung her to the top of the horse block and taking his own pocket-handkerchief, he scrubbed the tiny face till the child winced and squirmed; then he caught her to his breast and kissed her heartily, lifting his head to look down and talk to her, then bending again to kiss the beaming face.

The girl at the window had slipped to her knees and grasping the sill with both hands, was watching the scene spellbound. Only the wordless murmur of his voice came up to her, but she strained forward and abated her breath to catch that murmur apart from the prattle of the child. She followed his movements much as you have seen one, wholly ab-

sorbed, unknowingly imitate the motions of another who is eating some coveted delicacy. When he stooped and playfully burrowed with his lips into the baby's plump neck, the girl's hand, all unconsciously, moved to press her own bare throat, and with the act, the blood crept up from her heart, a warm unbidden tide overspreading face and neck and throbbing under her palm. When he smoothed back the child's hair and kissed its proffered lips, the watcher gave a quick half-grasp and leaning with closed eyes against the window-frame, moistened her own lips and yielded to the strange, swooning sensation that possessed her. And she kept her eyes closed, her indrawn breath half suspended as though, having inhaled some delicious but fleeting fragrance, she strove to retain it, and the memory of it.

A giggling laugh jarred her back to the conscious present. Ruth had arrived at the locust tree, had set her basket of garden-stuff in the shade and was holding one of her largest strawberries up to Paul's lips, but just beyond reach. As she tip-toed before him, Ruth looked more than pretty in her work-dress of brown gingham, her pink sunbonnet down her back, her blooming Irish face lifted. With one hand she essayed to feed her companion; the cup of the other hand was heaped with choice berries. He put the child down with some plaything from his pocket, captured the berry-filled hand, transferred

the fruit to his own and began deliberately to eat, tossing the stems at the girl's pouting, happy face.

Next Ruth brought a book from her basket and, coming close to his side, indicated a certain place on a certain page; whereupon he took a pencil and an envelope from his pocket and with the block for a desk, began figuring, with explanatory pauses, while his companion leaned near, following attentively.

Leaned near? Indeed. More against him than upon the block; and the two bared heads were very close together, at least so they appeared, viewed from a front, second-story window. School work? A fine pretext. And why couldn't she take her problems to the Rectory? And that book along with her in the basket. Evidently, they had an understanding as to meeting-places and times. Three times in the last twenty-four hours, Dix's word for it, and now again! Pity they couldn't do their courting somewhere other than at the front hitching-block in plain view of the horse-trainer and the half-dozen stable boys coming and going. Bah! they were common, low, both of them; a good match.

The master's daughter turned from the window. The room seemed stifling. She flung off her riding stock and wrenched at her dress-neck, panting for breath. . . . That Bradley girl ought to be ashamed to loll against a man that way. Uncle

said no girl who thought anything of herself would do such things. Nina didn't with Dix, and they were betrothed. So much for Ruth, Antonio's fiancée.

As for Paul Menendez—a fine foreman he, idling all this time with a Quarry Town girl when he should be attending to his master's affairs. Very busy he had been when she, his mistress, had wished a few hours of his time for her botany; his hours were all filled with alfalfa and the ditches. But Ruth Bradley—that was a different story. O. . . h! and another button of the dress-neck gave way, as, clutching at her throbbing throat, the girl walked the room with hurried, but aimless feet.

She brought up before a French mirror and stared hard at the flushed reflection. Well, what difference did it make, she asked the dark flashing eyes in the glass, the servants' doings and thinkings? What was it to her, Lilys Allan-Eldreth, the highest-born, the most beautiful, the richest girl in Colorado, if not in the——

There, they were going now. Paul was carrying the basket and they had the child between them, each holding a hand, and they were turning toward each other, laughing and chatting familiarly.

With the curtain-folds gathered in her working fingers, alternately crushing and loosing them, she gazed with burning eyes after the retreating figures

till they passed from view under the hill. Then suddenly, from no assignable cause, Lilys Eldreth bowed her head to the window-ledge and broke into a passion of weeping.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“A SNAPPFR-UP OF UNCONSIDERED TRIFLES.”

WEDNESDAY evening of the same week, as Marah cleared away the supper dishes, she watched her son with musing attention. Since Sunday he had been more silent even than usual; since Sunday he had eaten scarcely enough to keep a child alive; since Sunday he had almost lived in the hayfields, and since Monday morning he had not been nearer the House than the stables to get his horse.

Something was amiss. What? She did not enjoy Paul's confidence. She had always to “go from home to hear news” of his doings, of his rarely-expressed opinions. She never went to church, nor to the Rectory. She had not been to the House for more than ten years. She was intimate with but few of the Swedes and Irish of Quarry Town. Her cottage sat on a hillslope to itself, and she would have been quite as isolated, quite as solitary, but for her occupation of trained nurse.

This, Wednesday, afternoon, she had been called professionally to see a child of the Howards' house-keeper, and at the Howards' she had learned of the

prospective conservatory year east for the daughter of the House, learned that it had been decided upon only *since Sunday*.

Marah regarded her son speculatively, a slight smile twitching her thin lips. He had eaten less than ever at supper and now sat, neglectful of his customary after-supper smoke, his elbow on the half-cleared table, cheek in palm, looking at nothing. She had to ask him twice if he was through with his coffee-cup.

At that he bestirred himself, brought from his own room what looked like a large scrap-book, together with a pot of paste and some herbs rolled in a paper. He turned back a corner of the tablecloth, slipped off his coat with an apology to his mother, sat down before the opened book and began spreading on its page a native sedge, separating the delicate spikes and rootlets with patient care.

Marah passed behind his chair on a roundabout trip to the china-cupboard. Yes, the flower names already inscribed on the page were in the loose, angular hand affected by the up-to-date girl of the period.

So far, so good.

"And she is to be gone a year?" was her next step, covertly watching his expression.

"I believe so," he acquiesced, his expression betraying nothing but a deep absorption in a thin

blade of the whip-grass that insisted upon curling.

Ah, but you do not ask "Who?" my son. *She!* The mother smiled sagely.

"The year will lengthen indefinitely, I imagine."

The whip-grass had consented to straighten and was now being coaxed into succumbing to the wiles of Sanford's best.

"He lives in Boston, I believe," was her next attempt.

At last the tenacious Sanford had conquered. He turned the page carefully and placed a heavy book upon it. She made a final effort:

"Hilma told me—you couldn't guess what!"

He was deftly extricating a bushy little mallow from a tangle of maiden-hair, but he said, indifferently and with a downward inflection:

"I'll answer for it that it isn't worth repeating."

"Then truth isn't worth repeating."

"Hilma said that Ruth believed that Lena thought," smiled the young man, "Mother, mother! I did not think it of you. You'll be founding a Society for the Promulgation of Neighborhood News, next, and inesting in a tea-caddy!"

Marah shrugged her shoulders, but a determined light glinted in her eyes.

"Does she love this man?"

His eyes were not lifted, but the voice was as controlled as the hands; "I do not know."

"You have seen them together?"

"Yes, mother."

"Then what do you think?"

"That she cares for no man."

She passed on into the kitchen to complete her work. She was penetrating enough to know that his answers had been honest; and besides, he rarely deviated from the truth. He might decline to answer, but if he spoke, you might depend it would be truth. So he believed the girl did not care for him, and perhaps she did not. But did he care for her?

She called to him from the kitchen to know his plans for the remainder of the week.

He detailed them briefly.

So? The *farthest* hayfields, the *distant* lumber-camp, the *upper* game-preserve and the *Lower* Ranch—*until Monday afternoon!* And again the woman smiled meditatively.

She returned to the sitting-room, rolled down her sleeves, brought her sewing basket to the lamp, and the coat he had taken off.

As she lifted the garment, wrong end up, several articles fell from its several pockets: a small, worn Testament, a pipe and—what? a long-stemmed, withered rose.

His glance lifted from the tangled maiden-hair. She held up the pipe, and he reached his hand for it

with a "Thank you." She held up the little book and he indicated the table-edge next her. Then she stooped the third time and held up the rose by the end of its stem.

Well done, boy! Not the slightest change in your fair, fine face. You deserve exemption, but—

" ' Only a withered rose-bud,  
She wore it in her hair.' "

hummed the rich voice insinuatingly, "Son, son! I did not dream it of you. You'll be founding a Society for the Prevention of Race Suicide, next, and investing in a go-cart!"

The young man laughed appreciatively, though he blushed like a school-girl.

"Oh no, mother, when I haven't even a sweetheart."

"I know a certain pretty little girl who might contradict that."

This time he asked "Who?" in an honest, puzzled voice.

Marah enlightened him.

"Why, she is engaged to Antonio."

"And infatuated with Paul."

He turned his eyes upon her through a surprised silence. "I think you are mistaken," he said presently, ever so slight an annoyance in his tone.

"You mean to marry some day? Or will you follow the chaste example of the celibate-parson?"

"I mean first of all to get out of debt, else the afore-mentioned cart will be no go," he jested, rising. "And out of bondage," he might have added, but he never intentionally hurt even her who had placed him in bondage. His next words came from the depths of the pantry: "Where in—Eldhurst do you keep your irons?"

His mother waited till he came back, an iron in either hand, then she carelessly flung the rose toward the wood-box. It fell short and dropped upon the home-made rug before the hearth; and she missed the shudder her sacrilege cost him, for he was passing behind her chair as it fell.

She went about mending the coat, he to finishing his task to his own satisfaction. Silence lay between them. The woman reflected: "Hermosa," a house-rose, conservatory-grown; certainly not from any of the tenantry cottages, nor from the Rectory, nor from Howard's, neither of which had conservatories. She had seen such roses in Richard's buttonhole; and Monday when she was at Andersen's, Hilma had boastingly flaunted a bunch of the same sort.

"Have you been to Andersen's lately?" she asked, with sudden seeming irrelevance.

"Not since Shorty was hurt."

Two months ago ; and this rose was comparatively fresh-cut. Still, he had betrayed no emotion. She glanced up at him as he bent over his work, and watched the movements of his finely-trained muscles. He did not break a rootlet nor a tendril of the refractory ferns with which he was laboring, yet when he finished, each feathery frond lay to the hair's breadth in the place designed for it, and there hadn't been a lost motion in so placing it. She studied his earnest, absorbed face, dwelling upon the firm lines of mouth and chin, delicate but strong. Strength with repression. Power with control. Virility with restraint.

She fell into a reverie. She scarcely heard him when he told her good-night, admonishing her not to rise as early as he did, that he would see to his own breakfast before he went to the hayfield. She scarcely heard or saw. The mended coat lay under her idle hands ; her eyes were on the drooping " *Hermosa* " on the home-made rug.

Repression, control, restraint—all were graven upon him. He managed the minutiae of daily affairs as he placed the fern-fronds—precisely and with no lost motion. He was self-master under whatsoever provocations of excitement or anger. But wait. He had not yet loved. She knew his heritage—none knew it better. He had by nature and by inheritance a marvelous capacity for loving,

as marvelous almost as the power "She" possessed of provoking love. So, when once the fire should meet the touchwood, what then of curbs and checks? Woman is the supreme test of man. Would it then be power with control? Passion with mastery? Was there, among the earth-born sons of men, so rare a combination?

She sprang up impatiently. "We'll see," she muttered, "we'll see. Blood tells."

Some time after she had retired, had quit coughing and lay quiet, she heard his door open softly, heard him moving carefully with unshod feet. . . . . His forgotten smoke, she thought sleepily.

But when she rose in the morning, his pipe lay just where he had placed it, the evening before, on the window-ledge. His pocket testament, even was there where she had placed it, on the table-edge.

But there was nothing on the home-made rug before the hearth.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## IN LEAGUE.

THE week was passing. Lilys was viewing her world through very smoky glasses. Every one seemed in conspiracy to drive her from home; nobody cared; Eldhurst was deserted, except the Rectory. Silently and listlessly she went through the fittings of her traveling-dress and the others. For days her joyous laugh was unheard. Her piano remained closed. She did not leave the House, nor her room when she could avoid it.

For hours she would sit, gazing unseeingly from her window. Again and again in the midst of her reading or meditation would come without warning, the realization that she was going away; and it always came overwhelmingly, as a new sorrow to her hitherto untouched heart. Pride, rebellion, anger, rankled in her breast. The most divergent schemes suggested themselves—of going to the Chautauqua near Boulder, where Mr. Howard and Nina were taking part in the music; of joining Dix and DeLacy in Denver; of appeal to her uncle, of open rebellion, even of flight—where she did not know. She did

not ask herself why she did not want to go away, whom it was she did not want to leave. She only realized that in going she was leaving her girlhood behind her forever, that after she returned it would never be quite the same. How blessings brighten as they take their flight! That girlhood had never seemed so happy, so precious, as now when it was vanishing.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and until Thursday evening, she had not left the house. That evening she noticed William, on his way from town, stop the carriage at the foot of the hill and wave up toward the lone cottage of the Menendez'. That meant that he had mail for them.

When she saw Marah descending to him, the resolve she had formed and rejected a score of times in the past three days linked itself with an irresistible impulse. It was one of those curious decisions, distinctively feminine, which are born of protracted vacillation.

Obedient to this decision, she found herself walking down the hill to where William had left Marah standing. She took the Eldhurst mail from the woman and still lingered, though the other, after one searching look into the girl's tear-traced face, turned silently away.

"Marah!" cried Lilys with sudden passion, "you do not care either. Nobody cares. Papa and Dix

and Herbert and Nina are all away. There isn't a soul on this place sorry I am going away."

The woman studied the foreign inscription of a ring she wore, a man's ring with a curious shield design, and the unreadable expression did not leave her dark, emotionless face.

"Why should I care?" she asked harshly, without lifting her eyes from the ring, "What are you, what is any one or anything to me?"

"But you won't let any one love you—"

"Love!" muttered her companion scornfully, "There is no such thing under heaven; it is a myth, a name. Revenge—that is the sweet reality. If any man tells you he loves you, don't believe him, for he will have only his own ends in view. Laugh at him, girl; scoff at him. Tell him Marah says he lies, and that she ought to know, whose very name means bitterness. Has any man ever told you he loved you?"

Lilys hung her head.

"Harry did once, on our tally-ho ride to Estes."

"Harry Wentworth," sneered Marah, "a newspaper man, a poor society reporter. He has his eye on Eldhurst and the income and the family jewels. And you—what did you answer him?"

"Nothing. I made Nina ride with him coming back, and I sat forward with Fred."

"And is he in love with you?"

"Fred Nolan? No indeed. When I am down in Denver, if I don't go with Dix, I go with Fred, but always in a party. Papa does not allow me to be alone with any of them without a chaperone; and Uncle says it isn't at all proper for young people to couple off."

Marah smiled. "Not proper in Denver."

"Nor anywhere else, Manitou nor Estes, nor even here at home. I am never alone with any young man half an hour, even here. Helene will tell you.

Marah smiled again, a gradual, peculiar smile, but refrained from contradiction.

"And this Herbert DeLacy? He has asked your father's consent to marry you. Did you know that?"

"Yes."

"Do you love him?"

"I . . . don't know."

Her companion laughed a jarring, mirthless laugh. "If you did you would not answer so. When you fall in love, you'll know it; it's in the blood. Do you know why this man can not, dares not, urge an early marriage?"

"I never thought."

"Well, I'll tell you. He is not yet legally free from Mrs. DeLacy Number Three; the matter is now in court. To Mrs. DeLacy Number Two and

her child he is paying a stiff alimony. Mrs. DeLacy Number One died of a broken heart,—neglect, cruelty and abandonment.”

During this arraignment of the suitor, Marah had watched her companion's face for some change. But Lilys only shrugged her shoulders indifferently, though it was all news to her. She knew the man was a widower; that was all she had been told by discreet brother and anxious father.

“So you would not care to be Number Four? And anyway, who are all these, the Wentworths, the Nolans, the DeLacys? The Honorable Pierce Eldreth's daughter must not stoop; she must look high, so high, when she marries.”

“Don't, please don't talk of men and marrying; it is positively sickening. I shall never marry—never!”

Marah mentally itemized the points of the girl's voluptuous beauty and smiled bitterly. “Nonsense! Men are men; therefore you'll marry—marry and have half a dozen children in as many years.”

Lilys shuddered. “Never! Why, I'm not even in love and don't want to be. I want to stay a girl and ride and sing and just have fun; and Uncle says that's what I'm to do. But oh,” and tears welled up into the eyes, “I don't want to go away.”

“Why not?” sharply, her piercing gaze on the down-drooped face.

"I . . . don't know."

Her companion turned impatiently away and started up the hill. Lilys followed.

"Don't go . . . yet," she faltered. "I wanted . . . I came to . . . I . . . Where is . . . Paul, Marah?"

The light of an evil joy flashed in the woman's eyes, but she turned aside, saying with well-feigned carelessness:

"Over at Bradley's, likely. Shall I stop there and tell him you want him?"

The girl's cheeks flamed. "Certainly not."

"It's just as well. He doesn't get much time with her, and he wouldn't like to leave."

The cheeks deepened to an angry red, and the little foot stamped. "I think he would come if he were ordered to come."

Marah smiled broadly, her face turned safely away. "Oh, of course. He is here to obey orders. He has fixed your herbarium, if that's what you want of him; fussed a whole evening over some weeds and things. He told me to give you the book, as he would not see you again."

All the rich color died out of the girlish face and the chin quivered. She twisted the papers she held into a tight roll and did not reply.

Marah came close to her side, saying rapidly:

"Tomorrow early, the mill; the Eldora road till

it turns, then the sledge cut-off. Saturday afternoon, the hunting lodge, the cañon short-cut; the wagon in the morning."

The eyes of the two met involuntarily, understandingly, through the gloom,—and all in an instant, Lilys's arms went round the woman's neck. But Marah wrenched herself rudely away and almost ran up the hill.

Once she paused to watch the girl, lithe and graceful as a deer, springing up the opposite hill, to listen to the rippling notes of a mountain song.

"God! that boy must be stone blind," she muttered, "or else a coward, like his father. . . . They can't always keep her a child. She's going to wake up one of these days—and then? Oh, we'll see, Pierce Eldreth, we'll see!" and the chuckling laugh merged into a cough as she slowly mounted the steep path.

## CHAPTER XV.

## MISTRESS AND MAN.

Out from the steel gray scabbards of the east,  
The dawn-swords flashed, 'Mong sheltering woods and hills,  
The hunted shadows wavered, stood at bay  
An instant, then affrighted slunk away.  
The star of morning paled. The breeze awoke  
And claimed the misty mantles of the woods ;  
Then boldly drew their fleece-veils from the peaks  
That blushed to crimson 'neath the sun's bold glance.

Oh sunrise, "daily miracle of God !"  
Thy lavishments of gold and rubies fall  
And spend themselves upon a drowsing world,  
And man the loser. 'Twixt the dusk and dawn,  
The waking birds tell secrets ; wayside flowers  
Uplift their lips, sweets-laden, for the bees ;  
And Night, his woodland tryst but half complete,  
Reluctant tarries for one last embrace.  
Earth's breast is bared, her inmost heart revealed,  
Her mood most tender and her charms most strong,  
For him who knows that hour 'twixt dark and dawn.

PAUL arose from his sleepless couch before the stars had yet faded and, turning his horse's head toward the dark mountains, rode out into the dusk.

Always the mountains rested him. Wearied or

troubled, his spirit found comfort in their reposeful massive strength. His eyes ranged familiarly the length of the serrated purple chain that darkened the west, knew every crag and crevice, every swell and trough of its stiffened billows; its morning lights, its evening shadows; its smiles, its frowns.

And more than one characteristic had this Son of the Mountains unknowingly drawn from that noble pile. He had not spent his life in the shadow of the Peak for naught. Unconsciously character and creed had been formed, as was massed its masonry, rock upon unyielding rock. Great Nature grants to him who is mountain-born and mountain-reared not only falcon eye and sinews of steel and heart of flint, but fortitude and spirit-ruggedness and constancy that change leaves all unchanged.

Paul had these and more. For as his eyes had dwelt upon those mountains, crest on towering crest, huge, limitless, mysterious, sublime, imagination had sprung to rarer, dizzier heights than e'er his swift and daring feet had trod. His soul had grasped the majesty, the calm, the grandeur of the mighty mountain-land, and stood rock-rooted to the larger creed of Nature. All unconsciously that wall of granite ribbed and steeled his spirit round with steadfastness as with a coat of mail.

Despite a life of toil, his heart was song-filled as the mountain pine that murmurs with the music of

the wind; and up from his deepest being, his fancy would wheel as the solitary eagle, to breathless heights, even to the utmost peaks of the mountain realm of thought. Dreamer, nature-lover, ever bowing to beauty and grandeur, the poet-boy had very early personified, idealized, that majestic Peak which rose, a watchman in his signal turret, above the irregular western wall. He would be like that Peak, he had more than once told his boyish heart, as he gazed upon its serene brow that reflected the dawn's first smile, the twilight's last flush, while yet the lower heights were dipped in night. He too would rise above the mists and storm-clouds, though earth-bound, like the Peak. And even his heart of a man had drawn strength and serenity from that lofty pile, so silent, so changeless.

But this morning, he did not lift his eyes toward his noble friend, barely discernible through the gloom, nor yet to the Maker of the Hills, whence cometh all help. His head was bowed as he rode slowly through the gray dawn, and before him loomed the mountains, huge and dark as his own sorrow.

Only three more days, three days, three days, kept throbbing through his brain, and his heart sank heavily as he forced it to face the year without her near, and all the years to follow, all the future.

What a fool he was, what an utter fool! Allan

had said so, and he was always right. As well might an ocean-drop aspire toward the moon; some creeping thing be enamoured of a star! It was fitting that he had been halted like a cowardly deserter and faced about to front the fray. The past years had been one long fight against his love. A week, a few days more or less, should make little difference one way or the other. Repression had become second nature to him; Eldhurst was an excellent training-ground for the development of self-control.

Well, he had given Edwin Allan his hand, which was a tacit "I will try." Resolve with him usually meant accomplishment. And if it did not in this case, and he smiled grimly, he would probably be given considerable aid in finding and keeping his place.

His place! The king within him roused at the words, took up his crown and sceptre and cried aloud that merit, ambition, achievement, soul-worth—these out-balance mere birth and blood and position, make up equality among men. What difference was there between an Eldreth and a Menendez? Why had he not the right of every free-born man to win the woman he loved? Even Antonio Garia and Gustav Swensen exercised that privilege. Ah, but Ruth and Hilma loved their lovers. Lilys had found him convenient, useful, perhaps, in a sense, companionable, that was all. How like

the thrust of a cruel knife had been that last scornful measuring glance of hers!

And again, Edwin Allan, you are right. "To him that overcometh." Self-mastery—that is the supreme test of manhood. Besides, was she not wholly a child, though her years full-numbered his own? But his had been spun by Toil and reeled by Care and portioned out by Duty. Hers had run from Joy's swift spindle, through the fingers of Mirth, and Love had measured them. He had well epitomized her life when he carved upon her sundial near the summer-house: "*Non numero horas nisi serenas.*" His life had known scant boyhood; hers had been one sunny stretch of girlhood, and hers was the slumbering heart of a child, a germ unquickened, a bud sun-forgotten. To him she had never been less than the one central object of a supreme, if hopeless, passion; to her he had never been more than an underling, a convenience, at most a playmate, and this last only through her own condescension. And so—

But hark! the quick beat of horse's hoofs and a ripple of melody.

He had reached a point where the roads divided, the one dropping toward the Lower Ranch, the other rising abruptly toward the mountains. She was coming swiftly along the ditch-rider's path across the irrigation canal, which just here his road paralleled.

One glimpse he allowed himself of blooming cheeks and blowing hair, as she swung her little hill pony across the ditch; then he drew his horse to the side of the road, and sat with uncovered head and downcast eyes, waiting for her to pass.

But she did not pass. With two or three springs, Bonita landed her beside him.

"*Buenos dias, Don Señor Menendez,*" she tantalized, well knowing how he disliked his father's language, that he never used a phrase of it except when compelled to interpret, and that he shifted the burden of interpreting as much as possible upon Pepito. "*De que lado iremos?*"

"Good morning, Lilys." His sensitive face was flushing and paling by turns as she edged her pony nearer and fastened her laughing eyes upon him.

"*De-que-lado-iremos?*" she insisted in her slow wilful way.

"I am going to the lumber-camp."

"Your grammar is faulty. The context calls for the plural pronoun—first person, plural number."

"By the sledge-path, a hard trip——"

"And of course I am just learning to ride!"

"No road half the time and no rest——"

"And I am so delicate, an invalid, in fact!"

"And even then can not get back till long after night, with all there is to do up there."

“And I was never out after dark in all my life.”

“But——”

The laughter went out of her eyes. “Is it for *you* to say what I may or may not do?” And she struck his horse sharply and urged her own beside him, mountainward.

They rode forward in silence. The knolls leaped wave-like into hills; the hills rolled up into mountain-crests. The spurned road rippled behind them like a wind-blown ribbon, its further end lost among the breeze-billowed wheat of the lowlands. The sun, rising to higher vantage, poured his gold upon them, the snow-kissed breeze caught their breath as they sped against it. The road plunged of a sudden into a cañon’s cleft, and the horses took a more moderate gait for the long climb before them.

The heart that on a balmy morning feels the warming sunshine, hears the song of birds, and breathes the wild flowers’ fragrance, senses all the charms that woo to openness and joy; the heart that nurses bitterness and gloom under such influences is scarcely a human heart. The sun will find some crevice to steal in; and bird will follow bird through one small loop; then balm of blossoms will permeate the whole, till drop by drop the bitterness is gone.

Thus Paul, highly sensitive to Nature’s influences, yielded his gloom before her tender light,

lifted his head and smiled. Nor was it all Nature. Was there not yet another day of life for him? And should he not take the gifts the gods gave him? What matter that some whim or mere *ennui* had driven her to join him? What matter that she condescended to him, the working man, in his workman's clothes? What matter if stubborn pride and blinding prejudice hid from her the adoration in his eyes, the involuntary homage in his every act? What mattered all these? Was she not there by his side, under his care and protection,—dear, wilful, beautiful child!

He turned and looked down at the trim figure in its close-fitting riding habit, and his eyes grew troubled as they took in the details of her brilliant emotional beauty. How he loved her—every curve of the mutinous face, every line of the scornful lips, every strand of the shining hair. How the man's strong heart within him yearned over her girlishness, her inconsistencies and the dangers to which her own heedlessness and impulsiveness continually exposed her.

His first glimpse of her as she overtook him had told him that she was happy, so well had he learned to read her moods. Nor was it any surprise to find her amiable, though his last glimpse of her on Monday morning was recalled with a pang. But he had learned to allow for much, to forgive

much though she never explained, never apologized.

And she was happy this rare June morning. Like the morning, she was all smiles and song-snatches, looking and acting but fifteen of her twenty years. She did not ask herself why she was happy. She was neither introspective nor analytic. It was quite enough to feel that she was happy. Furthermore, she meant to be happy for three more days, and after that—the deluge! He might be temporary master of Eldhurst, but she was its permanent mistress, and she'd have his services for the remainder of her stay, or know why. Then when she returned from the East, she would begin just where she had left off with him and have absolutely her own way. She would have an understanding with her father once for all about this matter. Hadn't he said out in the summer-house there in the very beginning that this one was for her exclusively, and did she need him any the less now? For instance, there was her herbarium; what a relief it was to have it off her mind. Paul *was* good to her, busy as he was. She had not thought of it before, so much of service she accepted as her natural right. But this morning being unusually amiable and perhaps a bit repentant over her recent treatment of the faithful fellow, she was more gracious and condescending than he had ever known her to be. Whenever he lifted the sweeping boughs that she might ride under without

stooping, she rewarded him with a radiant smile; and she laughed and chatted and chaffed with him almost as though he were an equal.

She observed him too with closer attention than heretofore—noted with how little ostentation, with what unconscious grace and deference he performed thoughtful little services for her, such as starting her horse again after the frequent breathing-spells, guiding it in the best trail that she might have both hands for her flowers, or her hat when the gusts came, or the swinging down from his saddle, cowboy-fashion, to pluck the blossoms she indicated.

He sat well in his saddle, too, western-wise, a settled, easy seat, not rising forward with each stride of the horse, English-fashion, a fashion which so irritated her when riding with DeLacy. And, yes, Paul was well-mannered and good-looking. Well-dressed, he would be fine-looking, doubtless, with his vigorous, well-set frame, smooth-shaven face and determined yet pleasant lips. It rested her just to look at him. He seemed so strong, so sure of himself that you might be sure of him. And how the sun spun threads of gold in his brown hair and what depths it added to his eyes. Well-dressed, he would certainly be a handsome fellow. On the whole, he was rather hard to classify; it had never occurred to her till the talk with her uncle last Sunday. It was a pity——

"Paul," she said meditatively, "you should have been born rich. Do you know, Mrs. Scott-DeLacy said so that time last summer when you drove the four-horse tally-ho up to Estes for us. She said you were really something of a gentleman."

"Heaven forbid!" cried the young man fervently, "that is, if she would class me with her own party. I recollect that drive, recollect the disgust that possessed me over the artificiality, the soulless courtesy, the insincerity, over the language used to conceal real meanings. Are they women or painted figures? Are they men or fashionable automatons? What are the standards of value, anyway? womanliness or wardrobes? manliness or full pockets? Forgive me, but if those Capitol Hill patterns and those English cads are gentlemen, then I am pharisaical enough to thank God I am not like them. But are they gentlemen? Measured by Mr. Allan's standards, where will they stand? 'A gentleman is a man who is master of himself, who respects himself and makes others respect him. The essence of gentlemanliness is self-rule, sovereignty of soul. . . The effort to be self-sufficient, the pride which will accept no favor. Surely true nobility consists in character, in personal merit, in moral distinction, in elevation of feeling and language, in dignity of life, in self-respect.' The foot-rule to measuring Mrs. Scott-DeLacy's gentleman is: 'Tell me what

you are worth, and I will tell you what you are.' But, 'Tell me what you are and I will tell you what you are worth'—so say Edwin Allan and his kind, to whom the rank is but the guinea's stamp."

"Yes, Uncle talked like that last Sunday before you came, and he was talking of you." The tone was meditative, self-persuasive. Had he been as woman-wise as Herbert DeLacy, that tone might have told him much that was going on in her heart and mind. But he had studied only this one girl-woman with her ever-varying moods, and he attributed her kindly tone to one of the temperamental variations. So he shook his head, his momentary enthusiasm gone, and replied:

"But Mr. Allan is not the world. Your father comes nearer representing it; and he quotes, not Amiel, but DeVarigny: 'Seven or eight generations are needed to make a gentleman.' So you see, the prospects are gloomy for my great-grandson; and for my father's son, the case is quite without hope."

"Still there must be authorities equally good—"

"So there are. Emerson: 'How shall a man escape from his ancestors, or draw off from his veins the black drop which he drew from his father's or his mother's life?' And Holmes: 'A boy's education begins with his grandfather.' And Holinshed: 'Gentlemen be those whom their race and blood

do make noble and known.' Lastly, there is the Law and Prophets. The Prophet: 'Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities.' The Law: 'That will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation.' "

"But Paul," she began persistently, "with you \_\_\_\_\_"

He snatched her bridle-rein, starting the horses abruptly, and as they rounded the sharp turn ahead, he stopped as abruptly under the shadow of a large tree.

It was a gaunt, unhappy cottonwood. There were seven deep notches in the trunk, and one dead limb extended gibbet-like out over the trail.

He sat his horse upright and in grim silence, his eyes straight before him, a bitter smile touching his lips. He was experiencing something akin to exultation in thus calling her to the opposite side of the chasm between them, and forcing her to look down. This spot was his mental scourging-post, often sought, the torture-place of his soul, and he suffered the rapturous pain, the torment and delight of the flagellant in having her now for the first time there beside him in his proud humiliation. This was his answer to her half-spoken protest; it was his object lesson to her, rude, but unforgettable. If she had

even a grain of respect for his life lived out under her very eyes, if she found in him an ounce of worth, it must be in the full realization of his cursed inheritance.

As the girl sat looking up at him, she was tossed by conflicting emotions. She had long known of this tree on the little-used short-cut to the mills; but she had never before come this way, as it was considered a hard ride even for a man. Now for the first time she saw the gaunt, hideous object, more the gibbet than the tree, and the wild vine with loosened end whipping from the extended limb completed the likeness.

Of the contending emotions, the sickening sense of repulsion was uppermost, and she sat shrinking away from her companion as from something infectious. Then a sudden wave of reacting compassion caught her. All the latent maternal within her rose. She combatted a sudden inclination to pat and comfort and soothe; and understanding herself so little, the inclination frightened her. But she reached, laid her hand upon his horse's bridle, and, urging her own pony, fairly pulled him from under the tree.

And her act was vinegar to his open heart-wound. That she should pity him!

Awed by the sternness of his face, she did not speak for miles of their onward way.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## SWEET DANGER.

It was one of those days with which June foretells August, when the yet virgin summer stands with reluctant feet on the line betwixt her womanhood and girlhood fleet. Her breath is only warm; her clouds are not shadows; her joy is not yet rapture; her sadness

"Is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles rain."

The morning wind filtered through the pines and aspens with a murmur as soft as the kiss of a flute, a melodious sixth to the clear soprano of the brook that paralleled the trail. The faint moan of the wood dove sounded far, while the near and fearless lark poured the pleasing monotony of his liquid notes, like nothing so much as a tuneful declension: "*Sweet! sweeter! sweetest!*"

They had left the narrow cañon with its ribbon of water and ribbon of sky, had mounted the steeps; had turned from the last glimpsed vista of the dis-

tance-blurred lowlands with their far horizon-rim, an unreal world aswim in molten yellow mist. Before them the stooping sky seemed transpierced by the pine-points. Unsurmounted heights sprang about them, and always the Peak serene and constant. Suspended between two of the southern summits, one white cloud-fluff "slept and its shadow slept."

As the sledge path climbed, it dwindled to a faint trail, then to mere zigzag openings among cliffs and pines which none but the woodman's eye could trace; though they still passed through occasional miniature grassy seas whose wavelets, wind-whirled, broke about their feet in foam-caps of tossing flowers.

Nature in her June mood must again have glided into the darker musings of the man and stolen their sharpness ere he was aware, but he was presently roused by other means.

For more than an hour, driven by his tumultuous thoughts, he had pressed the horses, riding slightly in advance, holding aside the branches as before, sometimes guiding both animals, but not once looking back nor speaking. In the agony of his bitter musings, he would have ridden all the way full length ahead, but the horses, reared together, fed from his hand, inmates of one stall, were inseparable, and the foolish creatures insisted upon shar-

ing the trail where possible, crowding together and leaning one against the other during their stops for breath. His own Bayonne, a fine throughbred, full of patient endurance, knew his master's mood and bent to his task, with infrequent stops. Bonita, less enduring, lagged half a length with quivering sides and cupped nostrils.

Rounding a sharp turn on the mountain side, through the wilfulness of either Bonita or her rider, the pony tried to gain his side (the outside of the trail, as it chanced) but slipped, scrambled, then clung desperately. Bayonne stopped unbidden and flung himself against the rock wall, while his rider with quick hand caught Bonita's bits, pulling her head up sharply, and with a strong grasp on the back of his companion's saddle, steadied the pony struggling for equilibrium.

"Don't move. It's all right," his cool voice sounded reassuringly. Then for the first time he turned and looked at the girl. Her hat had slipped down her back and her face looked pale. She had reached instinctively and grasped his saddle-horn and was leaning toward him in the endeavor to keep the balance on the cliff edge.

With a supreme effort, as much of will as of muscle, he helped the wavering little pony settle to the safe side, and his own horse, though flinching and quivering, pressed in still closer against the sharp rocks. Then the group became motionless.

"It is all right; only keep still," he admonished as he relinquished his hold of the saddle and caught her firmly about the waist. Then for one minute, made sweeter by the danger, he thrilled with the joy of the strong holding safe the weak, the beloved. Slowly he drew her from the saddle and held her slim, girl's body against his body. Her arms went round him, her hair brushed his cheek. Left to him at that instant, the choice might have been death together on the rocks below, rather than life and the near separation.

But whatever thoughts were rioting through his brain, he was outwardly sane, even present-minded. Shaking the pony's bridle free, with both arms he lifted the girl clear of her saddle; holding her till the pony, thus lightened, gained the surer footing of the trail ahead. Then stooping, he gently lowered his burden and swung down beside her.

For a space of time neither spoke. She was even paler, and her lips were quivering as she bravely strove for self-possession. His heart smote him for the selfish absorption that had urged him forward at cost of her comfort, and he stood looking anxiously down at her as she leaned against his horse; but he could not guess that it was from neither fear nor weariness that she was trembling. His voice lowered to a sudden tender compunction:

"I have been such a brute. Forgive me. We

will take it easier from now on, no matter how late we are getting home. Wouldn't you better rest awhile?" as she turned toward her pony.

But she shook her head and insisted upon mounting. She was dizzy, but not from her recent danger. She was conscious of this only: that at the moment of her peril, she had been stung from head to foot and from foot to head with a wild, sweet sensation as unfathomable as it was unfamiliar, and to experience which she would again have dared the chasm's edge.

When he joined her and they rode slowly on, she seemed abstracted. By and by she said, as though reasoning aloud against this continued, causeless trembling, "No, I am not tired and I was not much frightened." Then she straightened in her saddle, shook herself and commanded, with an assumption of her old imperiousness:

"Talk to me, Paul. Tell me something."

Well would he have liked to tell her something. For all his outward appearance of quiet unconcern, his pulses were pounding madly and his heart itself seemed beating against his sternly-compressed lips.

"Something? What?"

"Oh, anything. Only talk."

He thought he understood.

"There was once a king," he began, "who set a spy upon the hearts of his people. But is it not

a greater art to spy upon the heart of Nature, to try to interpret her deeper meanings, to follow her plans, to surprise her, or better, to weary her by unceasing vigils into revealing glimpses of her mysteries? . . . See that old oak on the verge of the caving bank? The crumbling soil has laid bare the roots, and there, just below the trunk-stock where the roots begin to delve for nourishment, a large rock, you see, is imbedded. From the first, the tree has accepted the inevitable, at once grasping and encircling its trouble. What can't be cured must be endured, is an unvarying rule of Nature. So this tree has lived all these years with a stone in its heart."

Lilys lifted meditative eyes. That was just like Paul. Who else could look at an old oak tree and an ugly stone and find such things to say? But when he looked down at her with his rare smile, his eyes cast vague trouble into her heart and sent that sweet pang shuddering through her again.

"But out along the foothill road," he went on, "you recall there is a half-buried boulder, one of those lost rocks of which geologists tell us, a poor exile of whose homesickness no one dreams. Out of the cleft in the very centre of the rock there has sprung a tree, ever-green and bird-haunted. So the lost rock has lived all these years with a hope in its heart."

The girl listened and smiled. That sounded like old times. How pleasant it was just to ride along and forget everything but the trees and rocks and birds.

"But," she argued, "it is one of your favorite authors who says that Nature can not be surprised in undress, which means, I suppose, that there is one sacred garment of which she never divests herself. And yet by some, her symbols are so much more easily interpreted than by others. Or is it a case with 'the others' of being blind because they will not see?"

"In a measure, yes; and in a larger measure because most would-be Nature-worshipers attempt to serve two masters. The first commandment of Nature as of Revelation is 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' To him whose eye is single to her beauties her symbols are plentiful, their meanings simple. Truly, 'the air is full of sounds, the sky of tokens; the ground is all memoranda and signatures; and every object covered with hints which speak to the intelligent.' But all this is for him who holds communion with her forms, visible and invisible. Part of the world is too busy eating, drinking and being merry to give her a thought; the other part is too busy toiling that the first named may eat, drink and be merry. Thus Nature's shrine is all but deserted."

He ended as they reached the place he had had in

mind for their mid-day rest, where the horses must drink and graze, and where they would eat their own luncheon.

While they waited for the horses, he filled her lap with mariposas and columbines, then stretched upon the ground near her feet, while she rimmed her wide hat with the blossoms.

"Paul, what is the very sweetest thing in the world?" she asked abruptly.

"Alfalfa honey," he replied promptly.

"Nonsense! You know well enough how I mean it. Revenge, your mother says; duty well done, Uncle says; power, Papa says; love, insist both Mr. DeLacy and Dixie. What is one to believe?"

Her companion shook his head, but remained silent.

"Nina says it's love too," she went on, half musingly, "that is, the right sort of love. We were all down at Howard's one night last week and I had been singing Mr. DeLacy's favorite song, 'To An Extinct Volcano.' It is like this." And her lark voice bubbled out:

Thou wert wooed by the warring waters,  
In the aeons long ago,  
Ere thou dreamt of rising heavenward,—  
'Twas thy youth-time's fervid glow,  
When the Sea for the Earth contended  
With the Fire that raged below.

Thou liftest thy face to heaven,  
Serene, unmoved, alone ;  
For the far-off faithful Ocean  
No echo of his moan ;  
For the clamorous Fiery-hearted  
No touch save coldest stone.

Dost dream in thy storm-swept calmness  
'Neath thy veil of spotless white,  
Of a day when Ancient Chaos .  
Shalt loose the powers of night ?  
Set free the prisoned Fire  
Unleash the Ocean's might ?

Wilt sigh through the wreck and ruin,  
For thy nun's white veil of snow,  
While thou feelest fierce caresses,  
As in aeons long ago,  
When the Sea for thy love contended  
With the Fire that raged below ?

“ That's it, only of course you miss the crashing volcanic chords of Mr. Howard's accompaniment. Mr. DeLacy and Dix make me sing it over and over, though they say I don't put heart enough into it, since it is a love song.”

Paul devoted himself for a moment to tossing her the flowers that lay beyond her reach ; then he said lightly :

“ More geology than love, I should say ; quite a lesson in physical geography.”

“ Nina said it wasn't the right sort of love, with

its 'fierce caresses' and 'wreck and ruin.' She and Dix became quite excited arguing. She read us a sketch from a magazine to illustrate her kind of love. I begged the leaf of her; here it is," and she drew a bit of paper from her bosom. "My, how the two men did hoot and scoff at the writer" (glancing at the signature) "'Allan Marsden,' whoever he may be, and at poor Nina too. Classed both as 'sissies,' but I think it's pretty. Listen:

'Desire, calling itself by love's name, is a counterfeit to be guarded against just as the truth-like lie is the most dangerous. But it is easily distinguished from love. For desire is a self-worshiper, insatiate, clamorous for possession, mad for the merely tangible, and at close of its brief delirium of the senses, dies upon its own sword, gratification. Love, though sweetly human, though but a 'wavering image' of the divine, is far more than 'a self-sufficient pleasure drenched with perfume and crowned with flowers.' True love has more of tenderness than of passion; yearns to comfort, to bless, to protect; it is selfless, changeless, deathless. Love is at once the incentive and the reward of life. It is the link between the senses and the soul; between here and the hereafter, 'the soul embodied, the body ensouled.' It affords us our only foretaste of heaven. . . . She smiles upon me, and that instant holds an eternity of bliss. She condescends to me, and in that ecstatic nearness I appreciate Infinity. All Nature shares my happiness. The birds carol my love for her; the flowers exhale love's priceless incense; the heavens declare the glory of love. My sleep is love-illuminated; my toil is love lightened. Many waters can not quench love, nor can time, nor absence, nor coldness. I

exact nothing, hope for nothing. But I dream; I remember. I revel in the intangible, in the past. The warm wind on my face is her breath; the deeps of heaven are her smile; the murmur of the pines the exquisite vibration of her tones. At sight of a crushed rose, at memory of a chance touch, I tremble, I thrill, I exult. These are mine, love's treasures, of which even death can not despoil me; and they 'recompense for all the ills that have been or may be.' "

She glanced at him expectantly, but he made no comment. He was lying with one elbow in the grass, his bare head resting on one palm, looking off up the mountain-slope with eyes that reflected the deep luminous blue of the sky. He looked serenity itself. She caught herself wondering what were the ideas about love of one in his position of life. Marah was so bitter, DeLacy and Dix so deadly earnest about the subject, she experienced a curiosity to know what Paul might have to say.

"Tell me a love story, Señorito, a real love story—though perhaps you don't know any?"

His eyes were still on the distant slope. She had to repeat her question.

"Oh yes, I do," he replied, handing her another mariposa, "one of the prettiest imaginable, and I've been wanting to tell it to you for some time. Does the Little Mistress know why the trees love the birds? The Indians tell us that when the Great Spirit rested from the labor of creation it was

upon a peak—not our Peak, for it is too new. From the summit He could view much of the New Earth. He stooped and reached here and there, caressing the land. And lo! from each spot He had touched, there sprang a tree, lithe and graceful, but leafless. Then the Great Spirit smiled warmly, and the leaves, green and clustering, shot from trunk to tip of earth's trees. The trees loved them; the summer cradled them; but the covetous autumn smote them yellow and scarlet, loosed their hold and drove them groundward, where they must soon have perished. But the Great Spirit said: 'These are too beautiful to die.' So, as they fluttered downward from the trees, He revived and winged them; and each leaf became a bird that rose heavenward in a rhapsody of song. Behold! the red-stained oak-leaf was the robin; the golden willow-leaf, a yellow-bird; the crimson maple-leaf, a cardinal; the homely brown elm-leaf, the lark, plain in dress but rich in melody. Every year the birds go south, but they return and nestle in the trees, warbling to their verdant sister-leaves who can only whisper in response. And the mother-trees sway and shiver in wordless ecstasy at each return of their lost ones, loving with a love all unforgotten, 'yet dumbly felt with thrills moving the lips, though fruitless of the words.' How do you like my love story?"

"It's ever so pretty, but I meant a really truly

one about a hero and a heroine, a knight and a lady, you know." She wished he would tell her Marah's story.

"I know one of that sort, but it isn't cheerful."

She noted the quiver of his face. Was he thinking of his mother?

There fell a long silence. Her gaze wandered off over the pine-tops, and into the fathomless blue. There came to her the vague yearning she had felt so often of late, the only feeling she had ever tried to analyze, and the uselessness of the effort overwhelmed her now as never before. A sigh escaped her, and that was so unusual that he sent her a swift, searching look. She was absently fingering the crown of her hat, slowly pulling out the wild flowers she had inserted with such care. Her eyes were now bent on her task.

"Paul," she began hesitatingly, "I want something."

He sat up, but she stopped him with a gesture.

"No, you can't get it for me; no one can, because I don't know just what it is," with a sorry little laugh, "I want it very much, but——"

"Yes?" There was encouragement in the inflection. She had always been confidential, he sympathetic.

She struggled for expression, at great loss for words:

“I am fairly sick for it. I can not see it; it is a great distance from me and try as I may, I can get no nearer. Nor will it come to me. It is very beautiful, very satisfying. It sings to me, like the birds of your legend; it sings day and night, while I can only whisper responses, like your leaves. Sometimes I think it is Nature, and I pray to her. But she—it—moves from me. Sometimes I think it is my mother, and I go to her grave there by the church and beg her to come to me. I close my eyes; I hold my breath. I want her to hold me close; but I can not even throw myself at her feet. Then I know it is neither Nature nor my mother; for it is lovelier than—than this day or this spot or even than my mother. Sometimes,” her pauses were growing in frequency and in length, “sometimes it seems close. I mean it seems all around me . . . like a cloud or mist. But I want it near. I want to rest in it . . . to be, well, satisfied, you know; not looking and listening all the time for something that never comes. It is something I seem to have wanted all my life, but just lately I’ve wanted it more than ever . . . . It is making me sad. I don’t know what’s the matter with me. It’s the summer, Dix says, and the sun and the south wind. Sometimes I cry, when there’s nothing at all to cry about,” with the little laugh again that was half a sob, “except that . . . that I want it, you know.”

Yes, he knew. For one eternal minute he strove against temptation, the temptation there within arm's length of him, the eyes wistful, the lips trembling, the voice appealing to him for something which he *could* get for her; something *not* a great distance from her; something greater than Nature, more beautiful even than motherhood; something in which her wakening heart could rest and be satisfied.

As he lay back again with his elbow in the grass, only a trifle nearer her, she could not dream that he was fighting down the desperate desire to take her to his breast and put his life and soul into one kiss. She could not dream it, for he began handing back the wild flowers to her and his voice was admirably controlled:

"Have you told your uncle or your—?"

"I tried to, but he did not understand. He said it was sinful to want when I have so much; that I should enumerate my blessings, or pray when I feel so. Then I tried to tell Dixie, and he told me to go let the doctor see my tongue. I thought you might—" She looked up appealingly.

"I think I do understand; but it is one thing to understand, quite another to——"

"Now I don't want to hear you enumerate my blessings," she cried petulantly, "I won't listen. I know them. I can name them myself. But I haven't all. There is something—" she stopped and tried for a word, "something *more*."

His eyes looked tenderly at the troubled, wilful face. "Yes," he said gently, "it is—" He broke off and began again. "I have no sister, you know, and deal so little with women." He was feeling his way, was testing his ground, if it would bear weight and not precipitate him into the thin-crusted crater. "A girl's heart (and you are a girl yet) is a delicate, a lovely thing,—half human, half divine, it has always seemed to me,—whose deeper feelings and woman's impulses, her yearnings toward the Infinite and the finite too, are all coiled like petals close-sheathed within its fragrant self. Or

'Like a young bird when left by its mother its earliest pinions to try.

Round the nest it still lingers and hovers ere its trembling wings can fly.'

If the bud could feel, if the bird could think, those feelings and thoughts, I imagine, would be something like what you have just told me: an impatience for blossoming, a longing for plumed flight. Already those close-rolled petals yearn for the sun, though they have never seen him, though he seems far and vague. Already the fledgling feels 'premonitions sweet of wings,' though the blue of high heaven seems unattainable. Yet why be restless? why sad? In good time the last and inmost petal will lie trembling beneath the sun's kiss, all destiny

fulfilled. In good time the little wings will stretch with new-found power, all yearnings satisfied. And some day, in God's own time . . . ."

His voice, grown tremulous with feeling, wavered and fell, but neither noticed that he left an unfinished sentence. For she was gathering, not so much the spoken words, as their import. She was leaning toward him, as though irresistibly impelled, her task forgotten, her eyes on his face. His tones seemed melting music. It was as though her soul, long exiled, heard again its own language in native purity. She felt the subduing contact of a larger, truer nature than her own; felt her doubts melt down to faith, felt strengthened to rise into the patience of waiting, though not knowing why she waited, nor for what.

He did not lift his eyes, but his face had taken on a brooding tenderness that transfigured it like a dream-smile. A wave of answering tenderness swept her, culminating in a sudden almost uncontrollable impulse to reach and lift and caress the lock of heavy hair falling over his forehead.

In her confusion and bewilderment, she dropped her hand, which had half obeyed her impulse, to a long-stemmed columbine lying between them. He was reaching for the same stem; so, without pre-meditation, his hand closed over hers, hers over the flower.

She sprang to her feet, tingling through and through, her color surging in a sudden flood. He came to his feet more slowly, murmuring an apology; then stood as one who expects a blow in the face. But instead of the stinging rebuke, she stammered something about being ready to go, and he turned sharply away to the horses.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

## DARKNESS DEEPENS.

IN their saddles once more, they avoided each other's eyes and kept the horses as far apart as the narrowing trail would permit. He talked hurriedly, eagerly, clinging to the hand of Nature, so to say. He told her why the willow-branches weep, how the chipmunk got his stripes and the legend of the colored sandstone. The quaint idea in the last of a dust-crumbled rainbow won a faint smile to the girl's troubled face. He talked on, of church and mission school, outlining the plan of the work; of her summer-house and the new rambler roses he meant to plant round it in the fall; and he told her of Bradley's valuable mine up at Ward, but did not mention his own half-interest in it.

Closing an account of his last descent into the mine, he said:

"You see, ages ago, these rocks cooling, shrank, leaving cracks. Nature, being economical, at once set about 'mending.' She draws from the rock its very strongest material, and soon distinct crystals appear zig-zag, like veritable threads, cross-stitch fashion. So securely is this mending done that when a sudden change of temperature occurs, with the consequent shrinkage, the rock gives way anywhere else than at the cross-stitched vein. . . I wonder is Mother Nature as kind to temptation-rent souls, cross-stitching with the soul's strongest material, and so making at last the weak spot the most invulnerable? . . . You give that up, don't you, Little Mistress?"

"I should say so. There's more geology than love about that—like my song."

"I'm not so sure about that," he replied quickly.

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By mid-afternoon they reached the mill with its grumbling saws, its whispering, whirling wheels, its pyramids of rough lumber, its mounds of golden saw-dust. Men and teams were busy, and the resounding blows of many a sturdy axe could be heard deep in the pines around, as the two rode into camp.

Webb, the tall, cadaverous foreman, came to meet them, pulling off his cap. Lilys rested in his shanty home with Mrs. Webb and the little Webbs, while Paul accompanied the superintendent over the entire camp.

Now and again, as the two passed within her range of vision, she could see Paul stop to shake hands with one and another of the mill-hands, passing in and out among the workmen and their work with the rapid and spontaneous sympathy which characterizes the natural manager of men. Again he would stop to caress or lift to his broad shoulder some one of the little camp children who followed them, or even to lay a kindly hand upon the panting side of a great draft-horse.

He must have taken supper with the men at their quarters, for neither he nor Webb answered the summons of Mrs. Webb for the lunch which she spread for the Little Mistress in anticipation of the long homeward ride.

When the books and the pay-roll had been checked, the two mounted and turned homeward. The foreman, still talking, walked along beside Paul's horse, his hand on its mane. At the turn of the road where they parted from him, Paul recapitulated:

"As I said, Webb, Mr. Eldreth realizes how short of men you are, yet this can stand as no reason why the output of the mills should vary so from one month to another. Given a certain number of men and certain power, and allowing for breakdowns and accidents, the monthly supply should be more uniform. As to the condition of the roads, I men-

tioned that to him after your last letter came, and he allows for it. By the way, there at the lone pine, where the haulers cross the stream, and where they have been unloading part or doubling—all this can be avoided by making a detour to the left and fording further down where the banks are somewhat less abrupt. There is almost a natural ford marked by a tree on the right bank, a tree with a large stone embedded in its exposed roots. I noticed carefully every foot of the ground as we came up. Call the teamsters' attention to the matter. And Webb, when Ingham organizes up here, as I presume he will, you intend joining the union yourself, do you?"

"I think so. Sha'n't you? You'd better come. You belong to us, even though you are over us and in a sense represent the other side of the question."

"We are all laboring men, for that matter, born with our sleeves rolled up. Yes, I shall join at the quarries, if they will take me even on probation, Methodist fashion. How's the school?"

"First class. My kids just tickled to death. That Baxter's a big-hearted fellow, if he has got religion bad. I don't go much on psalm-singing, and the boys don't, but when it comes to reading, writing and figuring, we all need them. Then the reading-room—they're all taking to that, I tell you. And we don't forget, sir, that but for you, we'd ha' been

forgotten in these lines 'way up here in the woods."

"I think they were Mr. Allan's ideas rather than mine. Well, good-bye. If I can't come up next week, I'll see if I can spare you a few more hands."

"Paul, where did you learn so much?" queried Lilys as they galloped easily down the wood-road, "lumbering, quarrying, irrigation, sociology, poetry, legends."

"My, my!" he laughed,

'And still the wonder grew

That one small head could carry all he knew!'

Born in a hut, bred on a horse, as I've heard your brother put it. If I have some fragments of knowledge, I owe them to Edwin Allan, and indeed much more than I can ever repay; for it was his hand that guided my stumbling steps to Nature's feet and taught me to find God's wonders in her face. If we grow like the men we hero-worship, then if I live long enough, I ought to grow into a pretty decent fellow, don't you think?"

"I only wish I were half so good as you right now," said the girl impulsively.

He shook his head, laughing. "I refuse to wear a halo before my time, even for you." Then gravely, "Good? Ah, my dear Little Mistress, you do not know me. But that is Garia with the load off there. If you will excuse me I'll speak to

him a moment. I'll not be long, for it is late. Poor fellow! he will be disappointed over not being transferred to the quarries."

Dismounting, he gave her his bridle-rein and stopping Garia trudging along beside his heavy load, began talking to him in tones she could not distinguish. But she could tell from the Mexican's excited gestures that he was angry, and that Paul's reasoning was of little effect.

After a while Paul turned to the wagon and began pointing out certain poles of the load, and she heard the words "worthless" and "waste of time" and "in spite of orders." The half-breed pulled sullenly at the rope-knot which bound the center of the load and blindly jerked at a long and very crooked pole. As he recklessly brought the heavy butt to the ground at his feet, the lighter end, rebounding, struck Paul full in the breast and he sank to the ground.

Lilys reached him before the Mexican.

"Antonio! you have killed him!"

The man knelt, trembling, beside her, his swarthy face ashen, his heart quaking.

"*Eso no puede ser!*" he whispered shakily, bending over the prostrate form.

But Paul sat up, stood up and motioned him back, steadying himself with one hand against a tree. For a moment he remained silent, one hand pressed over his eyes. Then he said in a low, husky voice:

“Go back to your load. Take out those poles, as I told you and drive on to camp. Let me see you do it. Some day you may learn to distinguish your friends from your enemies.”

He stood while Antonio, cowed and silent, sorted his load, tied the stay-ropes and started his team. When the wagon was lost among the trees, Paul sat down on the nearest log, and resting his head in his hands set his teeth against the pain of the blow.

As he bowed thus, striving for breath, he heard his name, the one staccato syllable, and the tone made him lift his head, so much was there in it of commingled inquiry, fear, solicitude. He saw a white-faced girl, with tightly-knit fingers and quivering lips.

“Paul!” she repeated, laying a hand on his arm.

He got to his feet, trembling more violently under that light touch than under the previous blow. The pain was forgotten, the place, the lateness of the hour, almost the gulf between them, as he stood looking down into her eyes, his blood leaping rapturously. For one heart-shaking instant his soul rose in an agony of mad hope. There was in her eyes more than in her tone. The terror in them had died, and as he stood up, there shone the light of relief and—was it more than relief?

But he tore his gaze away and shaking off that

delicious touch said, with what calmness he could command:

"I am sorry it frightened you. You are very kind; but it is nothing. The blow was on the shoulder rather than on the chest. But we must go, for we have a long road and a poor moon." Then forcing a smile, "Bred in the saddle, I feel more at ease there than on the ground."

Lilys turned coldly away, let him put her on her pony, and they rode in silence the rapidly descending path.

That look in his eyes! How dared he? Was he forgetting that she was mistress, he the man? . . . Oh, such a blow as that. Why, he *must* be hurt. Everything had gone awry since Sunday. What a miserable week it had been. . . . His eyes—what had they said? And as he had lifted her to the saddle, the same sensation, exhilarating, exquisite, unknown to her till to-day. It was inexplicable. He had put her on her horse many, many times, but never just as he had this time. She could still feel the firm pressure of his hands about her. A certain vague shyness came over her. She would not again meet his seeking eyes, and she leaned away whenever the narrow path crushed the horses against one another. She found herself each time dreading, yet anticipating, this brief enforced contact. She shuddered in her

saddle and thought of the long ride before them with something between terror and delight. When he unstrapped her extra wrap and put it round her, she vaguely realized that it was not from cold she was shivering; and she felt unaccountably glad that the swift-descending darkness made it impossible for him to see her face.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## BEFORE DAWN.

ELDRETH hunting lodge stood at the head of a box of a cañon which was a mere crevice in the near mountain-side. The lodge was built of log, was large and roomy and well appointed. It stood in a small park-like clearing where the cañon divided into two narrower chasms, which in turn lead up to little wooded parks rich in small game. The stream which ran noisily past the lodge was well stocked with several varieties of trout.

When Paul reached the lodge on Saturday it was past noon. The doors were open, though the old keeper was nowhere to be seen. The provision wagon had come and gone. He could see the fresh double tracks on the little-used mountain road.

When he entered the sitting-room, a lunch was set for one, a small table having been drawn close to the big fireplace in which burned a bright piñon fire. He was grateful for Davis's thoughtfulness, for he was hungry after his tramp up from Eldhurst and through the cañon, a short-cut he had taken on foot in preference to riding the tortuous trail round the spur of the mountain.

After lunching and looking carefully through every room of the lodge, he stepped out and glanced about the clearing. The air of the high-walled cañon was still and oppressive. He walked slowly, following the sound of an axe.

This was the last of the most trying week of all his life. This very night yet, he would go to the Lower Ranch out of hearing of the whistle, out of sight of the smoke of that out-going train Monday. He felt that he had reached the limit of endurance, the last faint boundary between restraint and indulgence, the crumbling verge of all control.

How beautiful she was! what eyes, what a voice, what a Cupid's bow of a mouth. The lines went gliding through his mind:

"A man had given all other bliss,  
And all his worldly worth for this,  
To waste his whole heart in one kiss  
Upon her perfect lips."

She had been unusually quiet during the ride home last night, unaccountably so to him who knew her so well. But not being able to see her face and thus to read her mood, he too had kept discretely silent. Perhaps she had been tired, perhaps a bit sad at thought of leaving home. And he wondered was there one regretful thought for their happy childhood, now passed?

They had not reached Eldhurst until very late. He had chosen not to return by the sledge path which would have been hazardous after dark; and the public road was many miles longer than the short-cut. The lights were out at the House when they stopped at the block. Was it a fancy that she had clung to him ever so slightly as he lifted her from the saddle? Even yet he could feel her little hands on his shoulders, and the recollection thrilled him through and through. Was it a fancy that the kindness in her voice was for once unmixed with condescension as she had thanked him when he opened the door and lighted a taper for her?

She had said merely good-night, not good-bye, though he would not see her for a year. Parting from him meant no more to her than parting from Bonita or the Bernards; while he—he had lain awake half the remaining night-hours musing upon the mystic beauty of her face, his last sight of it by the dim light, recalling the chance touch of her fingers as he had placed the candle in them.

And over and over the experiences of the day had passed through his sleepless soul, every change in her child-eyes, every turn of her lithe body. And his dream! He was holding some one on the verge of an extinct volcano over-shadowed by dead cotton-woods, his eyes blinded by a too near candle, while all the air smelled like a woman's hair; and he had

awakened weary from vain efforts to get away from some one or something.

Well, he had "tried," Edwin Allan, he had "tried." And now, thanks be to God, he was out of the wilderness of temptation. He stopped, removed his hat, pushed back his thick hair and took a deep breath of the sweet mountain air.

Ah, it was well she was going, well in more ways than one. Did she think they were children still, could always remain children? How reckless, how indiscreet she was. If she remained, there would be a rude awakening for her; it was inevitable. Supposing she had heard that snatch of talk between two of the stablemen this morning as he had heard it? It had run something like this:

"Got in purty late las' night, didn't he?" That was the trainer's voice.

"I'd have been a darned sight later 'an he was, if I'd had such company." That was Sam's voice.

"A—w, Sam, she didn't go 'way up there with him. I seen him start alone; and when I saddled f'r her, long time afterward, she put off straight f'r the town road."

"Oh, she did. Well, *he* must have turned back an' overtook *her* somehow er other, cause they got in together. Reckon I orto know. Who sleeps in hyere, huh? Thought he was mighty foxy a-takin' her to the House fust an' a-doin' his own unsaddlin'.

But nobody gits in Eldhurst stables without Sammie a-knowin' it. An' I come down, an' there was Bonita in the stall with Bayonne, both wet where the saddles had been. So now!"

"Wall, what of it, young 'un? Hain't her and Paul been trottin' round this ranch together ever sence they was knee-high? Reckon he kin take care of her."

Sam laughed insinuatingly. "Oh, shore thing! An' some of these days the Boss'll wake up an' find he's got a son-in-law. Find he'd more'n that, if that little beauty tagged me round like she does Menendez."

"Git o-u-t, you fool! 'S though she'd look twice at him. Why, she's goin' to marry the tenderfoot, DeLacy. Ruth told me so."

"It's you that's the fool, an' Ruth an' the tenderfoot an' the Boss—whole shootin'-match. You'll see. Leastwise if I was in Paul's shoes, you'd see. Ain't much I wouldn't do to show them damned Eldreths they ain't so bang-up as they think. Paul won't, maybe; but 'twon't be because he can't. Put Mr. Richard in his place with as pretty a girl an' what would happen—huh?" And again that insinuating laugh.

At this point Paul had confronted the two, and the frightened stable boy had successively apologized, begged and made promises for the future.

But Paul, sick at heart, had been forced to the point of thanking God that she was going so soon and for so long a time,—he who but a week ago had been praying God to stop the sun and stars in their courses.

“Hello, Davis,” he shouted, espying the keeper of the lodge.

The old man dropped his axe and took off his hat.

“Hi thought you’d be ’ere before long, sir,” in the soft voice usual to the semi-deaf.

“I see Sam has come and gone, and that the lodge is O. K. for Mr. Eldreth’s party next week. Now there’s nothing but the ammunition, and then we’ll go up the gulches to the traps. Guess I’ll stay all night. Feels like a storm.”

“Then you ’aven’t seen ’er, sir?”

“Seen whom?” But his own quickening heart answered him swiftly.

There was a grin on the old man’s face as he replied: “Why, the Boss’s girl, to be sure. There she goes into the lodge now with a load of flowers.”

Paul looked at him frowningly. That grin and the insinuating tone angered him. He wondered how many more quarrels he should have on her behalf before the week was over. He said with all the severe dignity he could put into a shout:

“I’ll speak with her, Davis, and rejoin you in a few minutes, when we’ll go to the snares up the gulches.”

He found her down on the bear-skin before the big fire-place, her swirling white skirts half smothered with kinnikinic and cedar-sprigs. Her too-transparent dress was of white, soft and voluminous. The waist and sleeves were shockingly thin, showing her creamy skin through more webby, airy stuff underneath, cross-barred with strips of nothing and threaded with ghosts of white ribbons—all of which he very much feared could not have been intended for mortal eyes, but for the life of him he couldn't help looking. Scarlet ribbon bound her slim waist and fastened the end of her heavy braid. She seemed wholly and absolutely unconscious of the presence of an intruder, so he had time for a full minute of breathless looking before, smiling and dimpling, she glanced up.

"*You here, Señorito?* Why, how nice!"

But his glance was full of grave remonstrance now, and his mouth twice graver than his eyes. He was silent, and the silences of some persons can mean so much. Almost they were changing places, that *he* should even imply a rebuke to *her*. She sprang up and stood regarding him haughtily.

"Pray, is this not Eldhurst lodge?" she questioned, "Was I, Lilys Eldreth, supposed to know that you would be sent here? Haven't I the right to all Eldhurst without stopping to ask where its employes may be at work?"

As yet he had not spoken. She was accusing herself. A pained expression came into his steady blue eyes as they looked into her proud obstinate face. He lifted his hand in deprecation and turned silently away.

Her mood changed instantly. She came toward him, searching his unreadable face.

"Is it that you have work and don't want a girl around to bother? Do you 'sorto suffocate to be alone'?"

Not want her! Oh, that faint boundary line, that crumbling verge!

"Not that," he denied, hastily retreating, "but I hear horsemen at the entrance of the cañon, and I have two or three hours' work with Davis. You are not afraid here alone?"

"Oh no. I will arrange the flowers. But you must hurry back. Slight something; and we'll read and sing, if the old piano's in tune. There'll be half an afternoon and we'll have one more little good time, won't we?"

"*Won't we?*" she insisted as he walked away to a safer distance from all those cross-bars and ghosts of ribbons. For answer he smiled back at her with unconscious tenderness in his eyes.

When, some two hours later, he approached the lodge from the rear, he heard voices at the front. He entered the back door, traversed the rooms and

paused at sound of his own name in Richard Eldreth's sneering voice. Lily's was standing in the front door, her brother was outside on horseback, and now she was saying defiantly :

"I will not. I prefer to return with Paul. You are in no condition to escort a lady, just back from Denver as you are, and I dare say Bert DeLacy is no better. So you may as well go on. What if it storms? Why, I'll stay here if it pleases me."

A drunken laugh sounded, with something about it being sure to please her, and something else about her father.

"Go right home, and tell Papa the minute he comes in the morning. I don't care. Tell him I planned the rain and came on purpose to stay. I'd stay now, Dix Eldreth, if you had the carriage right here at the door. . It's my own business, and I'll stay a week if I like, see if I don't!"

All of Richard's parting shot he could not hear, as the horse was pawing and stamping, and the rising wind moaned; but he caught the words "low-born lover" and something about admiring her taste for Greasers, as with another drunken laugh, the man rode swiftly away.

The two faced each other in the sitting-room. His brow had cleared, his eyes were smiling. Why not, since the offender was beyond reach? Her cheeks burned two angry crimson spots and on her

face such an indescribable expression, such a commingling of new and strong emotions.

She went to the mantel and with her forehead down upon the sharp edge, leaned there, her breast heaving with suppressed feeling. He hesitated a moment, looked at his watch, then walked to the open door and studied the sky.

A great cloud, white at first, was puffing and boiling up over the range, trailing off toward the south, its dark shadow following beneath from peak to peak. While he stood, the cloud-curtain changed to a dull gray, then to dark blue, and faint lightnings began to vein it. The sun dropped behind the granite wall and the little clearing lay plunged in the shadow of both mountain and cloud. The rain was close, but his resolve was taken.

"Lilys, where did you leave Bonita? You must be starting at once. You will barely escape the rain by swift riding."

The girl sank into the nearest chair, covering her face. "I came with Sam and sent him back," she groaned, "Oh, I . . ." And she sat clasping and unclasping her small distracted hands.

"You did not bring Bonita? And there's not another horse in reach, for I walked." Then noting her distress and shame, he came to her and his voice was as tender and soothing as a mother's to her child: "Never mind, Little Mistress, I can get

you home in time, and these won't be the first wet miles we've measured together. Thank the Lord, you're a flesh-and-blood Western girl and not a wax doll. Get your hat, and be quick!"

She obeyed him, with never a word about remaining there with old Davis, nor about the one more little good time. He caught up the wrap she had forgotten and followed her into the porch. She stood watching while he fastened the door with some difficulty against the increasing wind. She looked the lodge over, and her companion and the surroundings with a strange sensation at her heart. The noisy brook seemed speaking with tongues; the winds prophesying. Was it all a premonition of the time when next they should stand on the same spot,—of all the changes between this hour and that? Who shall say?

## CHAPTER XIX.

## DAWN.

THEY walked rapidly down the trail that swung in and out and downward with the erratic meanderings of the little stream. The cloud had overspread the sky and settled earthward, unfolding its voluminous robes to the rising wind. The air grew chilly with suggestions of dampness. The thunder grumbled distantly, and thousands of unhappy spirits moaned through the pines and aspens.

Once he stopped to fold about her the extra wrap he had caught up in starting, and she submitted passively, holding up her chin that he might hook the clasp, but avoiding his eyes. Once he asked was he walking too fast for her, and she shook her head in silence. At the cañon's entrance where the footpath crossed the bridgeless stream, he unceremoniously picked her up and without a word carried her over the stepping-stones.

Out in the foot-hills it was lighter, but the wind had fuller sweep and their progress was slower. He took her arm and hurried her forward. Just round the hill ahead, he reminded her, the buildings of Eldhurst could be seen, the Rectory and Mr.

Howard's, but his mother's cottage was nearest, on the next side hill, and he would take her there till the rain was over.

For the rain was treading upon their heels. Sharp lightnings rent the increasing gloom and warning drops splashed round them. Beyond the hill they were skirting and just at the foot of the one leading up to Marah's cottage, there was a huge overhanging ledge of rocks sheltering a hollow, cave-like space beneath, no matter what the wind's direction. Both knew of Hanging Rock, for they were familiar with every foot of the country. They gained it, as the rain came flooding down.

"You'd think I was brought up in Gotham, the way I judge the approach of a mountain thunder-storm," he said as he drew her under shelter of the ledge, "Poor girl! What a tramp I have given you. Are you very tired? Are you cold? Want my coat?"

She shook her head, leaning away from him against the back wall. He stood near the front, looking ruefully out upon the steady downpour.

"See the deluge. Or, to be classical, 'Hark you now! Would any but these boiled brains of nineteen and two-and-twenty hunt this weather?' Nineteen and two-and-twenty—those limits include both of us. But we're well punished for 'hunting such weather.' For I'm afraid we are here for

awhile. But this hill drains quickly and the moment it gives us the chance, we'll make one more little run to mother's. Just now we'll have to make the best of it. I know you're not afraid of thunder and lightning."

He was devoutly wishing she were afraid; for in that case she would have to hide her eyes somewhere and . . . . All the while he was talking on so carelessly, he was looking at her lovely face in the half light, was thinking: "A man had given all other bliss." Yes, all, everything. "And all his worldly worth for this—" Aye, this world's worth and the next world's too, if he had any. "To waste his whole heart in one kiss—" Indeed, yes, waste, squander, forfeit! . . . . One, only one. This was the last hour, of the last day, of the last of life for him. There was no tomorrow. Ah, that trembling verge on which he stood was threatened with a landslide. Those eyes, that mouth of hers—they would make a man forget promises, consequences, honor itself. They would tempt the glorified risen, and he was a mere man—her father's hired man, he told himself bitterly. . . . Yet one, ONE, though the mountains fall the next instant. He turned toward her—

"Paul, do you know why I went to the lodge today?"

She too had been thinking confused thoughts.

She was rushing to her life-crisis, her great heart-dawn, at once an awakening and a revelation. But the thickest darkness precedes the dawn, and just now she was groping and stumbling in that darkness.

All the way down her brother's taunts kept repeating themselves. Paul, her lover! An insult! Yet the idea dyed her face and warmed her heart with the same mysterious, delicious thrill that his touch had given her. Lover, *lover!* No, no, she would protest one moment, he with all his learning, his goodness, his greatness of soul—he could not love *her*. Then she would hear that drunken sneer “lowborn,” and no, no, he with his parentage, his tainted blood, his social standing, he dared not; the thought was degrading. But *did* he? In all these years, had the thought ever so much as suggested itself to him? Oh, she must know, she must—this mother's daughter of Eve. Hence her question.

“Was there any special reason?” he answered half-wistfully. The momentary madness had passed. He had been crushed so often. How could he be presumptuous?

“Yes,” and she watched keenly for a change in his strong face, with long pauses between her statements, “I knew you would be there . . . and I wanted to ask your advice about—about Mr. Delacy.”

Positively, there was not a sign of betrayal in face nor voice as, recoiling slightly, he said steadily:

“Your uncle’s advice would be far better than mine.”

Silence then; and she was no wiser for her “justifiable lie.” The darkness was just as deep, the groping and the stumbling just as hopeless.

During the long silence, the cloud broke and the rain ceased with the abruptness characteristic of the climate and the season. Neither made a move to go; each was afraid the other would do so. He was thinking that these were the last moments he could be near her—ever, perhaps; was fighting despair itself. She was meditating how she might know if he had ever dared to think of her as other than his master’s daughter; and if he had, how she might break that fine self-command of his. There were ways.

“We did not have our one more little good time after all, did we, Paul?” There was a pathetic half-tenderness in her tone as she lingered over his name.

He locked his hands fast before him and looked at her steadily, the pain in his eyes deepening till she grew dim before him. He made her no reply.

“Why don’t you ask me to sing for you now, here,—one last song, one wee new song with such

a ripply, crinkly waltz-air and such rare wicked words. I am going away for a year, Paul—for a whole year.”

“My God!” he whispered under his breath, then turned aside and stood silent, erect, white-faced. She moved slowly toward him, into range of his vision. Her hat was down her back, her wrap over her arm and her hair blowing loose from its braid. Then her voice, with all its witching sweetness, the compelling power of an undertone he had never heard in it,—enhanced by their half-wild surroundings and accompanied by the drip-dripping of the raindrops:

The Warm Wind kisses the Rose of May,  
So daring !

She turns not away, nor says him nay,  
Who's caring ?

For buds will blow and winds must go,  
If he comes not back, who'll know, who'll know  
That she lay caressed on the Wind's warm breast ?  
If he dares, who cares ?

The bold Wave kisses the Lily's mouth,  
So daring !

Though she knows he is fleeing away to the south,  
Who's caring ?

For buds will blow and streams must flow,  
He will ne'er come back. . Who'll know, who'll know  
That she lay so fair on his bosom bare ?  
If he dares, who cares ?

My Love he kisses me while he may,  
    So daring !  
I turn not away nor say him nay,  
    Who's caring ?  
For lips will glow and my Love must go  
As the wind and the wave. Who'll know, who'll know  
That I reeled with bliss 'neath my Love's warm kiss ?  
    If he dares, who cares ?

Then only the rhythmic drip-drop of the rain, and the beating of their own hearts.

Obedient to some power, both turned at the same instant and looked breathlessly into each other's eyes. Her head was thrown back, her glance sifting up through half-closed lids; her lips were parted, a wine-cup undrained; her magnificent hair (loosened whether by the wind's will or by her own—you must say) drifted about her white dress like a dusky mantle, its passionate incense assailing his nostrils. She was temptation incarnate; as fair and

    " Young  
As Eve with nature's daybreak on her face."

And in all the great universe there were but themselves and the mystery of descending night.

There was not a yard's saving space between them. Something told him that the space must be kept—a dull something, akin to self-preservation. He was trembling like the mountain aspen. The

capacity for thought and action seemed to have deserted him. There was a monotonous humming in his ears. He experienced the dumb rage of the starving animal tantalized by present, yet forbidden, food. He tried to turn away, to look away, but instead they were approaching each other as though impelled, and he realized it. . . . Of a sudden the blood leaped to his face. He snatched both her hands, clutching them with unconscious fierceness, and drew her swiftly to him.

But with a little inarticulate cry, she wrenched from his hold and recoiled against the farthest wall, flushing, quivering, shaken to the depths, one hand flung up between them. He saw in her attitude only the queen insulted; in her eyes only the unquenchable flame of pride mounting and consuming all other expression.

This was the end, then! He almost dragged her from their shelter and on up the slope toward his mother's cottage.

This was the end then! Out of the chaos of her emotions she grasped one unmistakably, now. In that fragment of time when he had drawn her toward him, all but into his arms, her vision had been cleared wholly. The darkness had flown. The curtain of spirit had been lifted; the veil of sex had been rent. She, the girl no longer, read her woman's heart at last. Bent on drawing the truth

from him, she had wrenched it from herself; and she knew, without the shadow of a doubt *why* she did not want to go away, *whom* she did not want to leave.

“Low-born.” True. A fleeting vision of that hideous tree swam before her. The humiliation, the degradation came crushingly to her proud heart. Yet over and above this feeling rose one far stronger, a mad, uncontrollable desire for the close strong clasp of his arms, as they had folded her yesterday on the cliff’s edge, but once more—*now*. And after that, what mattered—anything?

But—her thoughts were growing more confused, more inextricable. He cared nothing. . . He had not half yielded, even after her song, that shameless song. . . . And now, a few more steps, and they must part, PART! And she loved him, O God! *how* she loved him! The hills wavered and reeled about her; it grew cold and . . . . so dark.

He turned solicitously as she stopped and stood, her hands over her face. The wind whipped her full skirts around him, her long hair across his breast. She uncovered her face and lifted her eyes, her lips voicelessly framing his name. Then she swayed forward and he caught her up from her feet.

Pushing open the cottage door and passing his surprised mother, he carried the girl on into his own room.

When Marah struck a light and followed, she found him sitting on the side of the bed with Lilys folded close to his breast. But when the light revealed the closed eyes, the corpse-like pallor of her face against the blackness of her disheveled hair, he started up, exclaiming:

“Mother! She is dying—”

“Fool!” cried Marah, “haven’t you sense enough to lay a fainting girl down? What is it you have said and done? Or,” with a keen glance into his face, “is it that you haven’t said it, haven’t done it? Give her to me. She will not die. They never can when they want to. They live, and live—and live.”

He laid her tenderly among the pillows, leaned yearning above her for an instant; then the last floodgate of his control gave way. With a groan he fell beside the bed, gathering her to him again, his face down in the swirl of her hair, his strong frame shaken by a passion of silent sobs.

His mother stood regarding the tableau, her hands on her hips, evil laughter in her eyes. She was too experienced a nurse to feel anxiety; already she saw signs of recovery from the slight swoon. Her laugh sounded, and with the coarseness that so often came to the surface of her nature, she said:

“Well, hugging won’t cure her when she don’t know what you’re doing. You’re pretty late in

the day with it. You couldn't keep her up to the Lodge with you—oh no! you must drag her down here to me."

She muttered something else and left the room. She closed the door noisily, but re-opened it softly, just a crack, and applied an eager, gloating eye.

She saw him lift his head, withdraw his arms and come slowly to his feet, though "his father's look" was on his face as he stood gazing down, the loving man, upon the sleeping woman, how hungrily, how passionately! But the look passed at once and there came the old brooding tenderness, sad, resigned, almost solemn. She saw him bend, his hands fast-locked before him, and lean close, as though committing the unconscious face, feature by feature, to memory.

And this was all the eager, gloating eye saw. For when the girl sighed and was about to open her eyes, he turned hastily and retreated through the outer door.

And a few minutes later they heard the swift beat of horse's hoofs on the road to the Lower Ranch.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE GENTLEMAN AND THE HIRED MAN.

ONE warm evening toward the end of summer, his day's work done, Paul was walking from the House toward home. With his thoughts two thousand miles east, he stopped at the group of outcropping rocks known as Red Cliff, leaned and began feeling for cigar and matches, when he was startled by a voice from the interior of the rock-cluster, a man's angry voice, which said:

"You are late again. I'm no sheep-herder to be kept waiting like this, with guests at the House."

And Richard Eldreth emerged from the narrow entrance, so close that the young men were literally eye to eye. Both were surprised; one of them embarrassed; but neither apologized, and for the instant neither moved. Then Richard stooped to pick up his hat, saying carelessly as he brushed it with his handkerchief:

"Ah, Menendez. I took you for some one else."

"So I judge," returned the other drily. He had drawn a cigar from one pocket, his knife from another, and was cutting the cigar-tip with painstaking care. His companion watched through an

irritated silence while he wasted two matches. The third match proving itself, the smoker calmly seated himself upon the flat rock near the entrance and leaned back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"You're wanted at the office," remarked Richard, still with assumed carelessness, glancing at his companion with languid toleration.

Paul smoked on placidly.

"Sure. Greaser up there the governor can't talk to, and it's none of my funeral."

"Where's Pepito?"

"How in hell should I know?"

Richard flicked some dust from the knee of his trousers, then walked the semi-enclosure twice, his hands in his pockets, observing from the corner of his eye the movements of the serene smoker. But noting that it was an entire absence of movement, he turned and announced sharply:

"I can get along without your company—see?"

Paul nursed one knee with his clasped hands and looked up at the sky. His companion's fists unclosed, then closed, and his voice quivered:

"You heard me."

"Richard," said Paul slowly, "when I stopped here I thought I was alone. But now you are here, and I know why."

"Well, what's it to you?"

"Nothing; except what it would be to any man."

"Any meddler, you mean; and I'll show you what happens to the breed when they poke into the wrong man's business," threateningly.

Paul made himself more comfortable against the rock. His companion took a stride nearer, his face and neck an angry red.

"You'll go or take consequences."

The other smiled. Evidently he would take consequences. Richard stood, nervously pushing up first one cuff and then the other as he scanned the coarse-clothed, muscular figure before him. Then he turned impatiently aside.

"You hired men always have the advantage, since gentlemen can not meet you on equal terms. And this is not the first time you've dodged behind your hireling's position to insult those above you. You even threatened my friend and guest, De-Lacy."

The accused seemed singularly undisturbed under this serious charge.

"He told me afterward of your bullying, but of course he would not soil his hands with you."

Only a lift of the eyebrows and a meditative wreath of smoke.

"And I know why you threatened him. You were afraid she'd get out of your sight half a day; that she might learn a bit of high life among her equals."

He paused. How much further might he go? The face before him was calm, though ashen. It did not sufficiently warn him.

"But she stayed to learn a bit of low life, it seems, under your virtuous protection."

"What do you mean?" The tone was low and even, though the eyes would have been sufficient check to one less reckless.

"You didn't take her to the Lodge late one stormy day that same week, dismiss Sam and stay the night—oh no!"

Paul came to his feet with a bound.

"That's a lie and you know it."

"Ah, indeed? Well, *she* didn't deny it when I threw it at her next day; seemed proud of the distinction. So you might be man enough to——"

A clutch of steel shut the remainder in his throat, and a face with burning eyes and pale lips swam before his vision as he was forced backward, downward.

"Say it's a lie," breathed the pale lips; but he was demanding an impossibility. "Keep her name out of this,—keep it out, I tell you," crushing the head against the rock by way of repeated emphasis. Then, his control returning, he relaxed his hold and straightened.

"Get up!" he commanded sternly.

The other obeyed sullenly, his face livid from rage and other causes.

"She is your sister, and if you haven't common decency, I'll teach you some. Now don't speak her name again—*don't do it!*"

Richard leaned against the rock till breath returned, then he shook himself as though freed from contamination itself.

"You keep your dirty hands off me," he panted, "or——"

The brothers took further measure of one another across the narrow space, and the pause was biting. The only sign of emotion in the younger was in the fingers that tugged at the collar of his flannel shirt as though it was too tight for him. The vigilant eye he kept upon the elder seemed warranted, for it discovered a hand moving stealthily toward the hip pocket.

"I wouldn't do that, Eldreth," he advised. Detected, the other laughed unpleasantly:

"Oh, this is your turn all right; but my turn will come, and then, Paul Menendez——"

Paul was taking another cigar from his pocket. He was again self-master. His tone was quiet as he said:

"You are right. In the present little matter the advantage is with the hired man. Act the gentleman, then, and go."

"I'm damned if I will."

Paul's shrug of the shoulders said, "As you like." He sat down again on the flat rock.

"Stay and be hanged. What good will it do?"

His companion glanced up in the act of scratching a match. "When the girl comes she will go with me."

"With you, *you!*" with scornful incredulity.

"We will prove it if you have the nerve."

"Ah," taunted the other, "I was not aware that I had the—*honor*; didn't know . . ." and he finished in the vilest manner, in the foulest language imaginable.

Paul threw him a glance of profound contempt, then settled into his half-reclining attitude.

Silence fell between them. Richard readjusted his elegant, but somewhat dusty, attire and leaned, jauntily humming a snatch of light opera and ignoring his companion.

Presently there was a light step, the crackle of starched petticoats and the pronounced odor of cheap perfume.

"Mr. Richard, is you there?" whisperingly.

"Yes; come."

The girl's figure appeared, a light shawl over the head and about the face.

"I could not get away——"

She stopped short as, pulling off the shawl, she espied two men instead of one.

Richard came to her with easy confidence. "This place seems to be infested with loafers. We'll go elsewhere."

Paul arose and came slowly forward, throwing away his cigar. The girl lifted him a startled look, then shrank against the rock away from both of them, her eyes traveling from one to the other. Richard was, for the first time, shaken from his assurance by her expression of face. He caught her roughly by the shoulder.

"Come," he said commandingly.

The shawl dropped from her nerveless hands; she hid her face and burst into sudden tears. Both men waited, the hand of one, the eyes of both upon her. By and by she left off crying and uncovered a face that went red and pale by turns as she looked at first the one and then the other.

"Come!" whispered her lover, his fingers pressing into her shoulder significantly.

The other stooped and picked up her shawl, then silently extended his hand to her.

She pushed the hair from her eyes with both hands, again looked waveringly from one to the other, then slowly gave her hand to Paul.

## CHAPTER XXI.

RICHARD SCORES EVEN.

As Richard, muttering fervent but impotent oaths, was nearing the House, his father called to him from the veranda where several men sat smoking.

"Dick, go into the office, won't you, and dispose of that Mexican? He's waiting yet. Sorry to trouble you, but he will not go, and we're none of us Spaniards enough to make out more than 'Eldhurst' and 'Mexico' and '*veinte y uno*'—twenty-one, I take it. Pepito's never in sight when he's wanted, and I guess Paul's gone home."

"Saw the foreman up at Red Cliff just now with that Andersen girl. Told him you needed him."

"Maybe she needed him," laughed one of the men.

Eldhurst rose. "Well, rid us of the Mexican, Dick, then join us in the billiard room; that is, if you're prepared for Waterloo. Wentworth's got on his fighting clothes, to say nothing of Warrior Nolan and yours truly."

When Richard entered the office, a slight figure rose and came from a far corner. He was a swarthy

man of perhaps fifty. He wore corduroys and an embroidered coat much the worse for the white dust of the Colorado roads. He had about him an air of simplicity, yet of gentility as well, and his obeisance, while that of the low caste Mexican, carried a certain superiority. The conversation was in Spanish, very pure on the part of the stranger, who began by asking a thousand pardons, but was he upon the noble estates known as Eldhurst.

He was.

And, craving an additional pardon, but the owner—could he have the honor of one little word with the owner?

He was addressing the owner.

The stranger bowed again, very low, with a sweep of the peaked hat. Ah, then, his long, wearisome journey would not be vain, for the information he sought was at hand. Here he drew nearer and lowered his voice. He sought one, or two, it was hoped, of the name of Menendez. It was very desirable that he should find them.

The other's face was expressionless. He turned carelessly and closed the door, then faced about and scanned his companion rapidly, speculatively. Menendez? Menendez? The name was somewhat familiar to the owner of Eldhurst, but—what of it?

The stranger pressed eagerly nearer, yet his

speech was markedly guarded. One known as Manuel Menendez, dead now some twenty-one years, had left a wife and a child, whether girl or boy the stranger knew not; but he would learn of them. The señor need not fear. He brought them good, only good.

At that his hearer shook his head. He was sorry, but the seeker was on the wrong track.

Why, was this not Eldhurst?

Ay, and he the owner. But no Spanish families lived in the neighborhood, and he knew all of his workers by name, was in close touch with them. He employed no Mexicans; only Swedes and a few Irish. But hold! that name—he had heard it in connection with Oakhurst, a large estate in the San Luis valley in Southern Colorado, which was doubtless the place sought. The names were so similar.

The stranger wavered. Eldhurst—surely he had not been mistaken.

He had certainly been misinformed. Oakhurst was in the heart of the sheep country, where all the employes were Mexican. It was there that he, Eldhurst's owner, had heard the name Menendez—if that was the name. Was not the death of this man somewhat . . . er . . . sudden, unexpected?

The stranger's eyes lowered. He bowed his affirmative. His emotion was unmistakable.

Then it was the same, a story but dimly remem-

bered. No, he knew no details, save that there had been a . . . in the West it was termed a lynching; and he was quite sure that the man had never married. But the owner of Oakhurst, if he, Eldreth, were mentioned, would do all in his power for the seeker. No, it was not a great distance; the train at Boulder, change at Denver, then Monte Vista, the nearest railway point to Oakhurst. Was that all?

Richard had stood during the entire conversation. Now he moved toward the door. The stranger followed reluctantly, sighing "*Dios mio!*" more than once.

At the door he stopped and stood with bowed head. He was no longer young, *señorito*. He had traveled weary miles. His mule was worn. He himself was very sad, very heavy of heart, where he had been so sure he would return light of heart. He had promised glad tidings to those near to him, but he had been misinformed, misguided, befooled—he, the bearer of good, only good.

His hearer was sorry, but twenty years are a long time. Doubtless he would not know descendants, should he find any.

Ah, but he would know. Any false claimant must show the ring, the shield ring which must still be preserved, since it was not . . . since it had not been on. . . Then he floundered hopelessly.

Richard had listened politely. Now he opened the door. He had guests who were awaiting him. Again he was sorry.

The stranger looked old and bent as he passed wearily out. He staggered once, and kept muttering to himself, "*Vestigia nulla retrorsum!*"

On the steps of the veranda he turned and bowed low to the "owner" of Eldhurst, with a thousand pardons for the intrusion, a thousand thanks for his kindness, for which God would reward him. He bowed with sweeping inclusion to the other *señors*, then walked with slow dignity to the block and mounted his drooping little mule.

Richard waited till mule and rider had passed from sight, then turned with a sigh of genuine relief.

His father laughed. "Struck a snag, did you, with his 'Mexico' and his 'one-and-twenty'?"

"Mighty near. Didn't know my Spanish was so rusty."

"Old chap had the manners of a prince," put in Wentworth, the newspaper man, alertly. "What was that he kept chanting to himself as he bowed himself out?"

"Oh, something about not taking any backward steps. Harry's nothing if not a reporter," and Richard winked at Nolan, "always copy-hunting for that precious yellow sheet. No copy this time.

Your 'prince' was fresh from 'Mexico'; 'one-and-twenty' years experience with sheep; wanted a job."

Pepito came panting up the steps.

"You wanted me, Mr. Eldreth, Sam said."

"Why yes," sarcastically, "about five hours ago."

Pepito hung his head.

"I sure wasn't away that long, sir. I was only doing a favor for Paul."

Richard glanced after him with a laugh and a shrug.

"Been doing my little best along the same line," he muttered, as he followed down to the billiard room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

“IS THIS YOUR SON, MY LORD?”

LILYS did not come to her far Western home for the holidays. The distance was too great. But there came to her father and brother on Christmas morning an excellent oil portrait of herself. Helene received it early, and, following the instructions of Lilys's letter to her, she unpacked and hung it in the library as a surprise for them.

Pierce Eldreth and his son, with the Rector as their only guest, ate a lonely Christmas dinner, the first holidays his daughter had ever been absent from Eldhurst. She was barely mentioned through the meal; they missed her too keenly. No one had as yet chanced upon the portrait in the library.

The meal was ending. Richard, as was growing his habit of late, had indulged freely in all the wines of the course dinner, and had settled into a dreamy silence, leaving the conversation to the elder men. Only when the saw-mill was mentioned did he rouse himself to say, in the hesitating speech of semi-intoxication, that Antonio Garia ought to be made to stick closer to his work up there; that he was

down to Quarry Town pretty blanked often; and that if his father wanted to give him, Richard, an acceptable Christmas gift, he would present him that fellow's discharge.

For answer his father gave him a glance half inquiring, half mystified, and went on talking about the growing dissatisfaction at both the mill and the quarries, which he sweepingly attributed to the unions organized the previous summer.

"I suppose I'll be losing Bradley when his contract is out, along in May some time," he lamented, "This 'Hopeful' mine of his up at Ward seems well named, and quite unlike the usual gold mine — 'a hole in the ground owned by a liar.' He showed me his assayers' certificates. A fellow that's struck such a vein as that doesn't want to boss Swedes and Irish any longer than he's made to. Wonder who's the silent partner? Some Eastern capitalist, I imagine. He says he's sworn to secrecy. I've half a notion it's DeLacy. At any rate he tried to buy Bradley's interest last season. Say, don't you think Bradley had the nerve to tell me that he had asked Paul to quit Eldhurst and superintend the 'Hopeful' for him? If I have to lose Ben and Bradley and Paul all in a year's time, I'll be in a pretty tight fix, as much as I have to be away. Has Paul said anything to you about quitting?"

"It would scarcely be like him to speak of it to

any one else before speaking to you. He did tell me that for some months Nolan has been urging him to read law with him in Denver; in fact Nolan himself told me that, and asked me to persuade Paul to take up law."

"And spoil a good foreman to make a two by twice lawyer. But that's like Nolan with his log-cabin-to-White-House notions. He's too ultra democratic by odds. And I suppose he has long ago convinced the fellow that he has the making in him of a great gentleman, too great for the mere management of these estates."

"You wrong him there; for Paul has never felt above his work. On the contrary, he is deeply interested, keenly alive to every phase of it. You once laughingly remarked that if you were to give him unlimited authority, he would turn Eldhurst into an experiment station rivaling that at Collins. Yet, for all your ridicule, his 'administration' has seen fallow fields made fruitful, the irrigation system almost doubled, increased output of hay, fruit, lumber, wood, stone,—all the regular products, to say nothing of his oil well, at which you first scoffed. And all the time you have been foot-free, as never before, for your precious politics. He has accounted to you for every cent of the great sums that pass through his hands; has engaged the best of skilled labor; has gone direct to dealers; has met your

business associates, carried your correspondences—in truth, he has lived your business responsibilities for you. As to making a gentleman of him, he is already that.”

“Nonsense, Edwin! you out-Nolan Nolan. Why, you can’t take raw man-flesh from corral or quarry, caution him against eating with his knife and splitting his infinitives, put a dress-suit on him and call him a gentleman. Gentlemen are not minted from such metal. At least ‘seven or eight generations are required to make a gentleman,’ and even then he doesn’t always feel at ease in his dress-suit. A gentleman has a gentleman’s qualities, his own by birth-right, transmitted unbroken through a distinct, far-reaching line: good blood, high notions, faultless taste, pride of name and position. He is a thoroughbred; rises to occasions; meets emergencies more than half way; masters situations; and he lives game and dies game.”

“And what of his morals? What of this blue-blood apostle’s creed?”

“Oh, as to that? Well, let me see. He is chivalrous, generous, discreet. He might be guilty of cruelty, but never of a discourtesy. He is a man of honor, as those things go; never unfaithful to a friend; he never lies, except for some woman’s sake. He takes the sweets of life, both the proffered and the forbidden, and pays the price in full without

whining. Though full of the knowledge of both good and evil, though disillusionized and *ennuyé*; whether loving or losing, suffering or sinning, through all and above all, *he is a gentleman.*"

His brother-in-law smiled reflectively over the nodding head of the younger Eldreth and on up to an old oil of a stiff-ruffed ancestral Eldreth under Charles the First, a stern-mouthed, strong-willed face, whose inquiring gaze seemed fastened upon the group below.

"I am persuaded that most arguments arise from failure to define terms used. But should we stop the more carefully to define 'gentleman' from the world's viewpoint and from heaven's viewpoint, I fear our argument might outlast your patience. Be very sure of this though, that 'between society's gentleman and God Almighty's gentleman there is a gulf of folly and untruth so wide and so deep that the one could not cross it if he would; and the other would not if he could.' About Paul's leaving Eldhurst, I have always taken it for granted that he would quit when the contract his mother made for him expires."

"And when will that be?"

"He is twenty-one in March some time. Paul was born just three days before Lilys was, you know."

Eldreth lifted his brows to indicate that he had not recollected, then fell into a brown study.

"Better give me ze zhob of bossing ze quarries," muttered Richard, lurching forward almost into his plate.

Helene opened the dining-room door, closed it after her, and with the familiarity of half-equal, half-inferior, said:

"Excuse me, Mr. Eldreth, but the girl Hilma Andersen is out back and she wants to see Richard. She says she must see him, and I can't get rid of her."

"She zhust can't see me," objected Richard, "Busy, tell 'er."

"I did tell her you were at dinner," explained his old nurse, advancing to his chair, "but she won't go. Better come for just a minute, Dickie," persuasively, "She's awfully anxious."

"Well. I zhust won't, though," persisted the young man, clutching the table edge as though he feared she might forcibly remove him as in his boyhood days, "Don't receive in ze kitchen. Give 'er zhis," pulling bills from sundry pockets and making a roll, "an' tell 'er to go 'way."

"What can she want, Helene?" frowned Eldreth impatiently.

"I don't know, sir. She is crying, and says she has no place to go."

"Well, Eldhurst isn't a home-for-the-friendless," he exclaimed. Then turning suddenly upon his son,

he asked with incisive emphasis: "Has this girl any claim upon you, sir, that she demands your presence at any time, guests or no guests?"

Richard hung his head, mumbling.

His father stared hard at him. "I wish to God your tastes ran a little higher than Swedish kitchen girls!"

Sober, Richard had a wholesome and restraining fear of his stern father; but being beyond that stage, he looked up and remarked insolently:

"Get it honestly, don't I? How about that little affair of yours with the Maitland woman?"

The master of Eldhurst sprang from his chair, and took one threatening stride toward his son, his face livid.

"By God! you shall marry your drudge for that; and Miss Howard will thank me——"

Then he caught the gaze his brother-in-law had fastened upon him. He sat down hastily, a crimson tide creeping slowly over the fairness of his face.

"Go to the library, Richard."

The young man arose, half sobered by his father's manner.

"What shall I tell Hilma?" persisted Helene, retreating toward the door.

Eldreth threw down his napkin and turned irritably.

"Lord Almighty! I don't care what you tell her. Give her the money and more, and send her away."

There was a painful pause. Edwin Allan turned his serene, kindly eyes upon the housekeeper.

"Tell her to go down to the Rectory at once and wait, and that I will follow her in a few moments."

When they quitted the dining-room, Eldreth led the way to the library.

"Better spend the remainder of the day here," he was saying as he opened the library door and came face to face with Lilys's portrait which rested on an easel, and was so placed that the light brought out all the rare flesh tints, the luminous dark eyes, the coils of jetty hair.

"Who—is—that?" he gasped, nearly falling into the Rector's arms. Then recovering himself, "Why, what a fool I am, Edwin. It's my own girl, and she's sent it for Christmas."

"No, Pierce," said Allan after they had stood in long admiration before the fine likeness, "I should have had to go anyway. You know we have special services tonight. I wish *she* were here for the music. Ah . . . could I see you outside for half a minute, Richard, before I go?"

"No sir, you zhust can't," declared that young gentleman crossly. "Don't like lectures; get enough from Nina. Going to shleep," and he huddled down upon a divan and began pulling aimlessly at the cushions.

Long after the door had closed upon his brother-in-law, Pierce Eldreth stood before the easel, glancing meditatively from the portrait to the face of the sleeper among the cushions, and then back to the portrait once more.

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The Rector paused once in his descent toward his home and, first glancing cautiously around him, drew from the depths of an inner pocket an old-fashioned miniature in a worn case, opened it and studied the face—a dark oval face, with full Cupid's bow mouth and coils of jetty hair.

"It is singular," he murmured, replacing the miniature and walking slowly on, "very singular."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## OUT OF THE PAST.

ABOUT the first of March there came a letter for Paul, postmarked Boston. Marah received it at the foot of the hill, and after William had passed on with the Quarry Town mail, she stood smilingly studying the superscription.

Marah had failed rapidly during the past six months. Her cough was deeper and more violent, and into her large eyes there frequently crept a strange, wild light that troubled Paul greatly. In vain he entreated her to follow the physician's advice and prescriptions. She was not afraid to die, she declared. When her work was done, she would go. Life did not hold so many joys that she should cling to it. In vain he pleaded with her to quit her work of nursing and allow him to situate her more comfortably than he could there in the little cabin on the hillside. He told her confidentially of his half interest in the Hopeful; assured her that his father's obligation to Mr. Eldreth had long since been discharged, with the interest, and that she could live in Ward or in Boulder, with good help and even some of the luxuries of life.

But she informed him coldly that she had no desire to live above her station in life; that they were of the working class; that she intended to work to the last and to die in their cabin, as he was pleased to call it. The lower class, she said, never gain by trying to ape the higher; blood will always tell.

So he had to content himself with adding gradually, even stealthily, to her comforts; with hiring a Swedish girl to do the work and to be company for her when he should go from Eldhurst (soon now, he promised himself) and with sending the physician on frequent, if useless, visits to their home.

While Marah stood, that March afternoon, studying the superscription of her son's letter, she glanced up at the sound of approaching wheels. It was Pierce Eldreth driving his high-checked roadster, Brownie. He came rapidly, but as the woman stood squarely in the road, he was compelled to pull down to a stand-still.

Though these two had lived all these years within a stone's throw of each other and though they occasionally encountered one another, yet they had exchanged no word since Marah left her ten-year-old boy up at the House, and today was Paul's twenty-first birthday.

As the buggy stopped, she came round to the side of it and lifted her eyes to the occupant, eyes

deep with the memory and the misery of the almost quarter-century since first his shadow had fallen upon her.

His own eyes were held by the fascination of hers for the moment, then they wandered over the yet sumptuous form, over the yet beautiful face, with its crown of midnight hair. For she was but little over forty, and, given a happy life, would now have been at the zenith of her woman's charms. Over this man she had once held the power of great physical beauty and feminine magnetism over a thoroughly masculine, strongly susceptible, nature; and now, for the one moment, she was all she had ever been to him. Again he saw the innocent eyes, the tempting mouth, the bare gleaming arms; again he heard her matchless voice as she had sung "Nay, Kiss Me No More!" a half-conscious protest against the insistence of his love, that night in June, the night that saw their love complete; again he felt the sweet wild thrill of a first passion wakening to riotous life. His stern face softened, his eyes grew misty, and there vibrated a tender, half-forgotten tone as he spoke her name:

*"Marah!"*

Her eyes did not once leave his face and a half-responsive smile hovered round her lips as she drew nearer.

The fretful thoroughbred tossed her head nerv-

ously, and the strong pull upon his wrists brought the man back to present realities. Before him he saw the woman whose betrayal of their relations had all but cost him his wife; the woman who after having enjoyed his love and all that went with his favor, after the betrayal which he might have forgiven, instead of holding herself sacred that she might still have been his (for is not marriage purely incidental?) had thrown herself into the arms of his lowest menial, a social outcast, a self-confessed fugitive from justice; had given to this Mexican peon the perfect form that he, the master of Eldhurst, had fondled, the form that had borne his child, an Eldreth!

His eyes flamed with the memory of his wrongs, his wounded pride, his baffled passion. Instantly she was conscious of the change, and intuitively read his thoughts. If he had wrongs, what of her? Her eyes blazed suddenly with the wild, strange fire that now of late burned in them so frequently.

"Is the debt all paid and the interest?" she cried, coming still nearer, "Does Marah Maitland owe Pierce Eldreth anything? If so, take this."

She handed up the letter, scanning his quivering face while he read the address in Lilys's unmistakable handwriting.

"From Edith Allan's daughter to Marah Maitland's son," she exulted, "But it must be the Eld-

reth blood, for the Eldreths will stoop in their loves; and blood will tell."

There was more than exultation in her low chuckling laugh, as she watched him wrap the reins around his wrist, deliberately strip the letter into ribbons and give it to the wind.

"It has gone too far, Pierce Eldreth, for such a remedy. You should have seen what I saw just before she went away. No, he does not go to the House, does not need to. Mohammed usually goes to the hill. He has a room of his own up there in his father's cabin. Oh, you shall see when she gets home—that is, if he is not tired of her. For this moment she would exchange her soul for one kiss of his—my son. Say, is the debt paid?"

The light of a demon joy glittered in her splendid eyes. She sprang recklessly to the side of the buggy, spreading her arms with a dare in her gesture, an open challenge in her face. For in his blind, speechless wrath, he had snatched the whip from its holster and was holding it menacingly high above his head.

Not for the space of a breath did she remove her malignant gaze from his livid, working face. His own eyes wavered, and when the whip descended it came down along the back of the terrified horse that sprang forward, plunging and snorting and all but uncontrollable.

Her mocking laugh followed him; then as the animal came under control further below, she climbed the hill a few steps, turned back, stopped. And out upon the still evening air there crept a tide of wonderful melody that insinuated itself into the very souls of the listeners. Rapture, ecstasy, passion, despair, contended for mastery in the outflow:

Nay, kiss me no more. Through this half-waking sleep,  
I sense far below us a dangerous deep  
The blind will stop short on the verge of a steep.

The impulse that urges the torrent's wide swing,  
The ruin and rage that the cataracts bring  
Lie back in the leap at the heart of a spring.

The spirit that lashes the maelstorm's mad swirl,  
That crushes and wrecks in its pitiless whirl,  
Was born of the foam that the playful winds hurl.

Oh, the pause of a soul at the yawning abyss !  
Oh, the wild surge of passion, the anguish, the bliss !  
Oh, the throb and the thrill of thy maddening kiss !

The home-going workmen paused and looked at one another. "The *Señora Pajara*," they said.

The master of Eldhurst set his teeth hard upon a passionate oath and drove on, never once looking back.

And Edwin Allan in his study lifted his eyes from a half-finished sermon, drew a quick breath and unconsciously laid a hand over the miniature in his inner breast-pocket.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## DISMISSAL.

ELDRETH fastened his quivering horse at the Rectory gate and found his brother-in-law alone in the study.

"Edwin," he began abruptly, flinging down into a deep chair, "you enjoy Lilys's full confidence, do you not?"

"I believe I do, Pierce. She has had but few thoughts and feelings she has not brought to me. I have done my best in part to take Edith's place with the poor, motherless girl."

"So I thought. Now, I'm going to ask you a question, and I want the truth, whatever it brings. I mean I don't want you to spare my feelings in the matter. Did she ever hint to you that she was in love? Was there ever a moment when you suspected that she loved except as a daughter, a sister and a niece?"

"Never," replied the Rector promptly. He was answering what had been asked him, truthfully, according to his knowledge. Why should he betray Paul's miserable secret, since Lilys had never given,

would never give the boy a second thought? Paul would never betray himself, so Allan would probably never have to make known the suspicion that of late years was strengthening in his disturbed mind. "Never," he reiterated, "She is still a child in thought and in action. I should think you could tell that. As Richard says, if she loves anything it must be Bonita or the hounds. She told Nina only the week before she left for Boston that she expected to devote several years to music and to studies as outlined by Howard and myself; and when we saw her off at the train and Nina laughingly reminded her that she was pledged to return heart-whole, she said, what I believe to be truth, that she was leaving her heart here at Eldhurst. You know she went with great reluctance. But why did you ask?"

Pierce Eldreth drew a long sigh of relief. "She is crazy, stark mad," he commented inwardly. Aloud he said: "Oh, DeLacy asked me if he might escort her some this winter past and I said yes, under his aunt's chaperonage. I wondered if Lilys had ever expressed her sentiments for him to you."

"No. I wish she had. I should have done all in my power to turn her thoughts from such a man."

"Why, what's the matter with DeLacy?"

"You certainly can not be ignorant of his and

Richard's shameless goings-on all last summer, now in Boulder and again in Denver. I suppose but for Nina's and Lilys's presence, they would have brought those Whitney women right here to Eldhurst. They did take them round and on up to Estes."

"Oh, that?" laughed his brother-in-law, looking relieved, "I thought from the way you spoke he had robbed a bank or held up a train. You can't judge a man by a lot of floating gossip. Why, he's of the best blood of a fine old French family, heir of both the Scotts and the DeLacys. He could buy and sell Eldhurst with his pin-money."

The Rector sighed, but refrained from comment.

There came a knock at the study door; it opened, but closed again from without.

"Come in, Paul," called Allan, "Was there something?"

"No sir, only to bring the review I mentioned. My business was with Mr. Eldreth. Sarah thought him alone. I beg your pardon."

"I shall be pleased to withdraw," said the Rector rising.

"Do not, I beg you. It is nothing you may not hear—with Mr. Eldreth's permission."

"Be brief!" scowled his employer.

"I wish to be released from my place with you," said the young man with simple directness, "I am

now twenty-one, and I believe the old obligation of my father is discharged, the debt all paid and the interest."

Eldreth bit his lip. "The debt all paid and the interest"—they were the woman's very words. He looked annoyed, troubled; but he controlled himself.

"The busy season will soon be upon us," he remarked, rolling his cigar in his fingers and regarding it thoughtfully, "Bradley is going to quit in May and go up to his mine at Ward. I'm afraid Ben will never be fit for supervising again. You have been acting foreman for more than a year now, with fair results. Let me make you so in fact. The pay, you know——"

The young man shook his head. "I thank you for the honor, but I have other means of support, other plans."

"Very well, sir, very well," cut in the other's icy tones, "No need to beg for common laborers in these days of road-walkers and tramps."

Paul winced, but he said dispassionately: "I had no thought of asking to be released under thirty days."

"You are at liberty to-day, sir,—now."

His companion bowed. "Thank you," he said with exasperating calmness.

"Do I owe you anything?"

“Nothing.”

He opened the door but turned back to say: “The books are in shape to date. The last mail brought those blanks we’ve waited for so long.” (He used the plural unconsciously) “and I notice in this morning’s paper that bids are open for the Springs and the Greeley paving. Bradley is above his average for the corresponding month last year, and feels sure he can handle either or both with his present force.”

“He’ll handle them without his present force. We’ve got to cut down somewhere.”

Paul looked surprised, but forebore comment. “Webb’s last report is the only one unchecked. You will find it in the upper left hand drawer. To-day’s mail has been answered and both places gone over. Wagner’s wife is ill and I have been taking his place; but Sam can do that quite as well. I am at your service for some days if I can assist your new foreman. Here are the keys.”

“There’ll be no need to detain you,” observed Eldreth shortly as he pocketed the bunch of keys.

A vague smile touched Paul’s firm lips. “Good evening,” he said, “Good evening, Mr. Allan.”

The Rector’s amused glance had traveled from the face of employer to that of man during the interview, and he but ill-concealed a smile at his brother-in-law’s discomfiture. They silently watched

the erect figure down the hall, the coarse, homely clothes forgotten in the easy dignity of the carriage. Paul always bore his fair head as though it wore a crown instead of a hat.

"Were you wise in declining his offer to remain the thirty days to help fit the new man?"

"It is always wise to give your men to understand that your business can run on without them," replied Eldreth crossly, "They get exaggerated notions sometimes of their own importance. They may as well learn first as last that Eldhurst depends upon no one of them. I fancy the sun will rise tomorrow all right."

"Whom have you in mind for Paul's place, if I may ask?"

The other laughed. "I wouldn't have him hear me say it, but I'm hanged if I know. Webb knows nothing but lumber; Max was raised at the sheep-corral; Garia is bright enough, but flightly, unreliable, and William drinks. Guess I'll have to be my own foreman for a while."

"I do not envy you. It certainly requires every moment and all the energy of a wide-awake, faithful, decisive man, one who is strong enough and tactful enough to handle men. All of these qualities Paul possesses in the superlative, some of which, I pride myself, I have helped to develop. I think you know my great love for the lad, Pierce. He

has, what I wish more young men could boast: gentleness, with force of character; the God-like gift of self-control; a clean and wholesome heart, the promptings of which never dyed a woman's cheek with shame; a higher regard for his spoken word than most men have for their written promises. As I heard one of the Swedes put it 'If he promises, it's done already right away.' Even while a mere boy he chose the right, the kindly, the manly thing to do—instinctively, it would seem. I, his teacher, know him as not even his mother knows him; and I have always regretted your prejudice against him."

"Well, you wouldn't expect me to fall into his arms, everything considered, would you?"

"The fault is not his."

Eldreth shrugged his shoulders and picking up a magazine, ran his eye over the table of contents.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "here's that man Marsden again, I see, in an article, 'The Right Divine to Govern Wrong.' Nolan called my attention the other day to a contribution of his in *Irrigation Age*. In the article he asserts (what is true, when you think) that there is practically no relation between the laws regulating water supply and the actual practice of irrigators, and that it follows that the laws fail of their objects—the economical use and the systematic use of the supply at command. He gives

figures in proof from existing canal contracts, figures which bring to light more inconsistencies and absurdities in our state laws and in our contracts than I ever thought could exist. He closes by saying that the magnitude and importance of the water-supply question in the development of the West, social and industrial, as well as material, are very much underestimated; points to the fact that the waters are of far greater value than the land, and that their distribution and the laws governing the same will prove more potent factors than are dreamed in the furtherment or hindrance of the up-building of the West. He knows Colorado from soil to sky, and water-rights by heart. I wish we could get such a man to address the association once in awhile. He is well-informed and practical; writes like a Western man."

"I do not know if he could be persuaded. He is a modest man, as well as a busy one."

"You know him?"

"Quite well," smiled the Rector, "'Allan Marsden' is only a pen-name."

Something in the tone made his companion look up quickly. "Not Nolan himself?"

"No."

"Not Howard?"

"Guess again."

"It might be yourself, if you were not more

interested along other lines. There's not another hereabouts could do it."

"Not I. Evidently you are unacquainted with Eldhurst's own people, brother; you are absent too much. You have just dismissed 'Allan Marsden' from your service."

Eldreth fell back in his chair. "Not Manuel Menendez's son!"

"Even so; but obviously not his father's son. His mother's?" ventured the Rector.

"Pshaw!" growled his companion, "he doesn't resemble her even in looks. Where does he get his fair hair and eyes?"

"*You* can best answer that, and say also where he gets his bearing, his intellect, his self-poise."

Eldreth whirled in his chair. "What do you mean by that, Edwin Allan?"

"Listen. I overheard two workmen as Paul was passing through the quarries not long since. 'A Menendez?' laughed one, 'oh yes, of course. A blue-eyed, white-skinned Mexican, sure. Manuel Menendez had a whole lot to do with that hair and that walk of his. She must think we're all fools. I know this—' And the end I did not hear, though it's not hard to surmise. Then the other said: 'Now I know whom he looks like—I've just figured it out. Why, that big picture in the chapel, of the fine lady—what's her name?—you know, the one who had the church built.'"

Pierce Eldreth leaped to his feet, his chair going over backward. "Good Lord! My Mother!" he gasped, "Does any one think?"— He broke off, walked away, but came back, stopping squarely in front of his brother-in-law. "Well, *you* don't think it?"

The Rector lifted his mild eyes steadily. "You certainly must give me credit for being as penetrating as the quarrymen and the sheep-herders, knowing all that I know. Why, it was only last Sunday that I heard a couple of shepherds from the Lower Ranch commenting upon the resemblance between Richard and Paul. The carriage was full of your guests, and the two sat on the driver's seat together. And look at them yourself. For all the one is so dark, the other so fair, there is the same contour of face, the same straight brows, the same delicacy of feature, the same build of body, though not the same walk. Paul does not bear the faintest resemblance to his mother; you, yourself, say so. Nor does Richard. Yet these two, *though unlike their common mother*, resemble each other. Again, is Paul in the slightest like his father? Menendez slouched; Paul walks with a quick, clean step: the one was cringing, tricky, all down-hill, so to say; the other is courageous, his every tendency upward: the one never opened his lips save for blasphemy or some foul story; the other speaks becomingly of holy

things, and I question if he ever so much as thought evil. I tell you, if this boy is the son of Manuel Menendez, he is a living contradiction of all the established laws of heredity. His father a peon? There is not the hint of servility in the son's make-up. His father, that incarnation of passion uncurbed? Paul never in all his young manhood betrayed the shadow of an unworthy instinct. Ask Ruth Bradley, or any other girl he has ever shown attention. Ask Lilys, whom he has served intimately from childhood. Watch him in the presence of women, and you will observe much of the old-time gentleness and chivalry in his bearing toward the other sex. No, somewhere not far back, on one side or the other, 'his tribe were God Almighty's gentlemen.' Mark me: there is not a drop of that Mexican's blood in Paul Maitland's veins; he is no more the son of Manuel Menendez than I am."

His brother-in-law had stood during this speech, his cheeks paling, his eyes staring blankly. Now he took another stride or two, but came back to say hotly:

"I don't care a damn what the hired hands think. What I see fit to do is quite my own business. But you were her brother, and, by God! you've got to believe me. What do you take me for, anyhow? Do you imagine that woman was anything to me

after she gave herself to that mongrel? Is that my style? Would that be like me, even if I hadn't married the very day after she threw herself at him? Why, look you: this son of hers is twenty-one, only twenty-one—and it couldn't be, I tell you, it *couldn't* be. I know that you haven't a very exalted opinion of my morals, and that we never could look at things from the same view-point; but I swear to you, Edwin Allan, on my honor as an Eldreth, that for the less than year your sister lived to bless my home, I was true to her, no man was ever truer—however I lived before, or have lived since. A man might so wound another woman, but Edith Allan—never!”

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE WOMAN WHO LISTENS.

WHAT whim of fate was it that ordered the torn fragments of Lilys's letter to be found by Ruth Bradley?

She sat down by the roadside and pieced the sheets together, strip by strip. It was a long letter. Much of it she did not understand, for most of it had reference to a conversation of theirs about the mission school and work in general among the poor; and mention was made of the writer's change of views on the questions discussed on their ride to the saw-mill. She frankly confessed that his side was the right side, and assured him that her most pleasant anticipation in her return to Eldhurst, June first, lay in the fact that she intended to undertake the school and mission work with him and her Uncle and Nina, to cease her frivolous, aimless life and try to deserve the respect and gratitude of those dependent upon them. So would they take up the old happy life in three months more; only she would endeavor to be less selfish, that she might be worthy to work beside him.

She closed by begging him not to leave Eldhurst on his twenty-first birthday, as she had learned was his intention, but to wait till she came and they would talk it over with her uncle.

Ruth put the fragments of the letter carefully into her bosom, with a guilty little glance round and another up toward Marah's cottage. Then she pondered. If Paul had received that letter, it would not now be lying torn by the roadside. Of that she was certain. If he should yet read it, he would reconsider quitting Eldhurst. Of that too she was certain. And if he remained, instead of going to Ward, what of her, Ruth? She knew why he flushed and grew reticent whenever Lilys Eldreth's name was mentioned; and she could read between the lines of this letter the writer's profound respect, her high regard, her deference to his opinion.

If she gave Paul the letter, which evidently some one had read and destroyed (the Boss?), he would change his mind about affairs of the House being none of his affairs. He might lift his eyes even to the only daughter of the House. Of course the Boss would never hear to that, even though Paul knew as much and was as good-looking as Mr. Richard himself.

So, she would save Paul heart-aches and trouble if she kept the letter from him. Of course she ought to give him his own, or at least ask him

about it. The Rector would tell her so; Paul would tell her so; her own heart told her so. But once he read it he would never, never look at her again; and now Miss Eldreth had been gone so long and he had not to come at her beck and call, he was beginning to come to the Bradley cottage oftener.

Again: If there were no misunderstanding between the two, Miss Eldreth would return and join Paul in the school work, and then? Oh, she knew, she "felt" just what would happen, in spite of the Boss, or any one else. And what right had Miss Eldreth, who had everything, to come down and take working girls' young men away from them? How would it seem to live as she lived up there at the House—nothing to do from morning till night, no meals to get, no dishes, no washing and ironing; to have just everything to wear, rich furs, big hats with real plumes, gloves for every suit, and slippers and riding-boots and Oxfords, besides shoes, and such jewelry, rings that flashed and sparkled, and a watch; no mending nor making over last year's styles; anything she wanted to eat and some one to cook it for her; to sleep as late as she wished, to give orders and ride and play tennis and sing in the choir and have a houseful of company every season and scores of friends and beaux—that rich Boston man and Fred Nolan and Harry Wentworth—what else did she want? Didn't she act now as though

she owned the earth? Didn't she look down on every body who had to work? Once when she, Ruth, had helped Helene at Mr. Richard's birthday party, just as an accommodation, hadn't Miss Eldreth ignored, snubbed her, as though she had been a common servant like Lena?

The girl's eyes flashed resentfully at memory of the slight. Oh, she knew a way forever to "fix things" between Paul and the Boss's daughter. She hesitated about going quite that far, but . . . Well, she'd keep the letter awhile yet; she would "see about it."

She ascended to Marah's cottage where she had seen Paul go an hour before from the Rectory. She had not talked with him for some time. He had been to the quarries, but was always so busy with her father, or else Tony was down from the mill.

She found the door ajar and no one in, though she thought she caught a glimpse of some one lying on the bed in Paul's room. She hummed softly a bit of an Irish love song, took off her hat before the sitting-room glass and inspected in turn her hair, her cheeks, her lips and her brows. She was trying to admire her long lashes through half closed eyes, when some one entered from behind. There was a low musical laugh, and before she could turn, some one clasped her eyes with one hand, her waist with the other and kissed her full on the mouth.

"Paul!" she stammered, crimsoning and making a half-hearted effort to disengage herself.

"No, not Paul, either," cried a mocking voice.

Springing away, she turned and faced—Richard Eldreth, whom she had not seen these two months. (For reasons of his own, that young gentleman had seen fit to absent himself from Eldhurst immediately after Christmas, spending the winter in New York and Boston.)

"Prettier than ever, mavourneen," his deep voice flattered, "Come, that wasn't half a kiss," and he held out his arms to her.

But there was a burning light in his eyes from which she shrank away. He dropped his arms, a frown on his handsome face.

"Oh," he sneered, "if only I wore brown overalls and a flannel shirt—" with a rueful glance down at his snowy shirt-front, his carefully creased trowsers and his shining patent-leathers.

"I . . . I don't know what you mean."

"If only I were my father's foreman, see what my daily reward would be."

"Mr. Richard!" she denied, coloring more deeply, "he never kissed me in his life, never wanted to."

"Then why did you call me Paul?"

"Because your voice and his, your laugh and his, are so much alike."

"I should feel deeply flattered."

"And because I didn't know you was home."

"Just got back, and I came up to find you the first thing."

"Oh, you're funnin'. You've been to Howards' and you know it."

"Indeed, I have not." (He forgot to add that Nina was not at home.) "William just brought me from the train. And he hasn't put away the carriage yet. Come, let us go for a drive. There's no one over at the House except Lena."

"I . . . came up on an errand and I must wait to see Marah," objected the girl, retreating, a little frightened by his manner and at finding herself alone with him. Had she been mistaken? Was Paul nowhere about?

Her companion came nearer. "Why will you always put me off? This is a nice way to treat a fellow after he's been gone all winter; when he came home on purpose to look into certain lovely eyes and to hold certain pretty hands, since it seems he can't get anything else."

Ruth looked down at her hands and tossed her head with a half glance at her reflection in the glass. "What else does a fellow want?" she laughed, lifting her eyes coquettishly.

"Come here and I'll show you," and his eyes riveted hers with sheer animal force.

Her cheeks scorched painfully and her heart quickened, but she bantered lightly: "Oh, you like blue eyes and light yellow hair best of all. Hilma told me you said so."

Richard's glance flickered and fell. "Hilma!" he laughed, "What does that moon-faced, tow-headed Swede girl know about my tastes? No one believes anything she says."

"I suppose you know she's married?"

"Believe I did hear it," carelessly.

"Yes, New Year's day. They had fussed, but Mr. Allan got them to make it up."

"Hope they're happy."

"Gus ain't very good to her. He won't let her wear any of the pretty dresses she bought last fall, nor any of the jewelry. He broke up her prettiest chain and won't get her another, though he's been promoted to crew-foreman, at much better pay."

"And how is your black beast?"

"My—*what?*"

"*Don Señor Antonio Garia*, hewer of wood and carrier of water."

"Oh, he don't carry no water and he oughtn't to cut wood. He's up at the Mill yet, but he'd ought to be here, because he's a quarryman, the best at Eldhurst, if Gus did beat him over at Lyons last week at the single drill contest. I s'pose you heard that too. Hilma's braggin' to everybody."

Eldreth made a gesture of disgust. "Oh, Ruth, what do you care about the low quarrymen and their doings? You are surely not going to throw yourself away on that dirty mill-hand, sweet and pretty as you are, and turn down the Boss's son into the bargain."

The girl was silent, weighing his words.

"Of course it's your privilege; mere matter of taste. But every one wonders what pretty little Ruth Bradley sees in that ill-favored Mexican mongrel."

"You . . . you shouldn't talk about him so, Mr. Richard. Tony he loves me."

"Well, Lord above! don't I? Why have I hung about Quarry Town like some outlaw for a five minutes with you at the back gate? Why have I come back home when everything here is stale, flat and unprofitable? With whom do I waltz? Of whom do I dream nights? Whom do I love? Tell me!"

"Miss Howard, I reckon."

"Never mind about Miss Howard. You listen to me. I'm not going to be trifled with any longer. You're coming with me this week, or it's all off. Your father's away from home for three days to come, and the coast is clear everywhere. You've not been to Denver for months. I've told you I'll take you, show you an elegant time and get you back

before your father returns. If anything's said, you've been visiting your cousin Maude's and you didn't know I was within a thousand miles of Denver. Not many girls have such a chance. And as for jewelry, I might help you select some. My taste is accounted fair," and he took occasion to transfer from one pocket to another an astonishing roll of bills.

Ruth's poor heart was in her throat now. He was closer to her, his pleading face bent above her. He *was* handsome, and so much higher born than Antonio or Paul. Not many girls had such a chance, but . . .

"I'm afraid. Oh, don't ask me."

"Afraid of whom? of what?"

"Tony. He's coming down tonight. Oh, my sakes! you don't know Tony. He—he's *awful*."

Her companion laughed easily. "Leave the little half-breed to me. That will be my concern."

"But Tony wants to marry me," with a wistful little emphasis on the name.

"Of course he does," he laughed, ignoring the emphasis, but pressing nearer and capturing one of her hands, "we all do."

"Father says that gentlemen never—"

"Talk marry," he ended for her, "Now you know better. Look at your cousin Maude. Wasn't she waitress at the St. James, and didn't one of the

boarders fall in love with and marry her? Come now, be sensible. I thought of course it was understood between us."

The girl gasped. A proposal, and from the Boss's son! "But—but—I—" she stammered.

"Oh, I know; not right away; you're too young, and you don't care to settle down yet. Of course not. But you love me, Mavourneen, you won't deny that." He had pushed up the loose sleeve and was pressing quick warm kisses on the flesh of her plump arm, adding between kisses, "And I shouldn't believe you if you did deny it."

"Oh don't—please don't," she pleaded faintly, shrinking against the wall toward the door of Paul's room, whither she had all the time been retreating. Paul must certainly be asleep. If only he . . .

Richard followed, the soft arm held to his mouth in a long pressure. "Come tonight," he pleaded, his breath on her neck, "come to the first north entrance, the side door beyond the bow-window. I'll watch and let you in. Or if you'd rather, there's the summer-house. We can go to the city yet to-night. Anywhere—any way. Oh Ruth, how sweet you are! How I want you! How I want you!" Both arms went suddenly round her; he was crushing her against the wall.

"Paul, Paul!" she wailed.

There was a quick movement in the room ad-

joining and the door near them was thrown open. Richard's back was to the door and before he could turn, his collar was seized, he was lifted and flung headlong against the wainscotting of the opposite wall, while Ruth, pale and trembling, clung to Paul.

Richard did not rise, but lay with closed eyes and blood-stained face.

“ You have killed him—*you!* ”

It was Marah's shrill treble, as she darted through the door and fell on her knees beside the unconscious man. “ Your own—master, your own master! ” she repeated, lifting malignant eyes to Paul's face. “ Ruth, bring me water. ”

Paul watched her wash the blood from Richard's forehead, then turned to the frightened girl and without a word, led her from the house.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## MOTHER AND SON.

THE two gone, Marah sat down on the floor and drawing the head and shoulders of the stunned man into her lap, gazed down into the pale face with yearning tenderness.

But the strange, unearthly light came into her eyes. She lifted him still higher, cradling his head against her full breast and rocking to and fro, began to sing :

Is it death ? Is it sleep, my Dearie ?  
Sleep, sleep !  
Ne'er to weep, ne'er to weep, nor weary,  
Sleep, sleep !

It is death, it is death, my Dearie !  
That's best.  
I'll not weep, I'll not weep ; life is dreary—  
Rest, rest !

Richard Eldreth opened his eyes, tried to sit up, but sank back, blinded by the pain in his head. A pitying look came into the woman's eyes and she

clasped her arms more tightly around him. He struggled up to a sitting position, pushing her away and leaning against the wall with closed eyes. She crept closer, with the cringing look of a beaten dog. He impatiently flung away the hand she laid on his arm.

"Let me alone."

"Don't you want to lie down?"

"No. Where is he?"

"Taking her home."

The man uttered an ugly oath and got to his feet, but sank into the nearest chair with a groan. Marah was beside him in an instant, holding his head against her and staunching the trickling blood.

"He shan't have her," he muttered.

Marah laughed. "He cares nothing for her. He looks higher. And you'd best let him alone. He has twice your strength. He could kill you."

"Well, what is that to you?" pulling away.

She drew him back and, leaning, whispered something in his ear.

"Good God! and not his?"

"Mine *and* his."

He sank back against her through sheer weakness, staring vacantly up into her face. Then he started up, saying quickly:

"But he has acknowledged me. I bear his name. The will is drawn for me as well as for Lilys. I have seen it. We share alike."

Her smile was half contemptuous, yet her thoughts were sad. There was no pleasure to him then in finding a mother. He had never a thought for her who bore him in misery and in shame, herself a mere child, betrayed, deserted? He was a true Eldreth. And she—dear God! how she had starved for her baby, sacrificing her very self for his material good, when sometimes she would have given—

His agitated voice broke her musings. “How many know this?”

“Your father, of course, Edwin Allan and myself. Torture by fire could not draw it from your father; Allan gave his promise more than twenty years ago and he will never break it, and I know how to keep a secret. The man with whom I lived nearly a year did not dream it. Edith Allan knew—knew it when she took my lover from me; but the dead keep all secrets,” and she laughed loudly.

He pondered deeply for a time; then his thoughts fell from his tongue:

“And you never lived with him. Why, can’t you see, if it suited him, he could declare me unlawful and rewrite his will. What in blazes were you thinking of not to live with him? Where were your wits, and he as rich as Cræsus? Why didn’t he marry you?”

“Why didn’t you marry Hilma Andersen?”

She paused for the reply he did not make, then added bitterly: "She would grace the House about as I would have. Oh no, it's ladies, snow-clean creatures like Edith Allan and Nina Howard, that the Eldreths must have as *wives*."

"But you were beautiful, at least. You must have been. But you were a fool, just the same. Think of Eldhurst! And there were breach-of-promise suits, secret marriage,—any number of ways."

She smothered the contempt in her eyes and then they grew wistfully tender again; and this woman who all her life had been strong and harsh, went down on her knees beside the child of her love entreating:

"Call me 'Mother' once, Richard,—only once!"

"Oh come now, don't be silly!"

He rose unsteadily, but when he reached the door, was compelled to lean with his hands to his head.

Slowly, almost painfully, his mother arose from her knees, her face cold and hard again, and seemingly older. She did not speak till she was close to him, then she said sternly:

"I have not told you all, Richard—*Maitland*."

She glanced about apprehensively in the gathering shadows, then putting her lips close to his ear, she ended her speech in the veriest whisper.

"The d-e-v-i-l!" he ejaculated, staring at her aghast, "*No, No!*"

“ Yes.”

He drew an audible breath, and a long silence spent itself.

“ And how many know that? ”

“ Two, in all the world.”

“ You and I? ”

“ You and I.”

He sprang to her side.

“ And this secret, Mother, *dear Mother?* ”

He bent forward in the gloom, looking deep into her eyes that were misty with joy now.

She lifted eyes and hand in mute eloquence to heaven.

Then the hands of mother and son met in a long clasp.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## CRUEL WITH THE VIRTUE OF A MAN.

PAUL hurried Ruth to her home in absolute silence. She sobbed and shivered all the way, clinging to his arm. Had he known less of men and proportionally more of women, he might have guessed at the truth. When he would have left her at the gate with a brief though kindly good-bye, she clung to him more closely.

"Don't go away mad at me, Paul. Please forgive me. I just can't stand it."

"Why will you persist in meeting him?" he questioned, his grave rebuking eyes upon her, "I would feel more sorry for you if you had not been warned over again. You know your father's opinion of him; and heaven only knows what Antonio would have done in my place just now. Dick Eldreth is not the man for a good girl to listen to. Why will you not understand me, Ruth? Shall I have to make it plainer?"

"He wasn't there when I went up to your house, and I didn't know he was comin'. Honest and true, Paul."

"Why, then, were you there?" he asked sternly. "You met my mother at the foot of the hill. You knew she was not at home."

The girl's face drooped. "I . . . Don't you know?" she whispered.

"To see Selma, the girl?"

"No," and her head bent lower.

"Oh, of course; to see me about Antonio's transfer to the quarries. Indeed, I have done all in my power. I have even offered to take his place at the mill."

She lifted her head with desperate courage. "Who wants *him* here and *you* up there? Oh, if you was like any other man, you'd know—so now!"

Both her hands were clasped about his arm, her pretty, eager face was lifted. He drew away slightly to look into her eyes and so gather her meaning. Then he unclasped her hands and put her gently from him. The warm color mantled her cheeks at his touch.

"Now . . . now you know, Paul," she stammered.

"No, I do not," he denied firmly, "and you must forgive me if I seem meddlesome in the matter of your friendship with Richard Eldreth. But I am your father's partner and Antonio Garia's friend, and I could not look them in the face day after day if I did not act in all things for their interests and the interest of one who is so dear to both."

She could but feel the gentleness of the rebuke; but the strong regard, almost veneration, which he always inspired in her susceptible heart overwhelmed every other thought. Was there another such in all her little world—so manly, so sympathetic, yet so inapproachable? Tears of disappointment welled in her eyes. She knew he was slipping from her. She bowed her head against his arm and sobbed:

“Oh, I will never look at Mr. Richard again, nor at Tony either, if . . . if . . . I don’t care for either of them; you know I don’t. Paul, Paul! I love—”

“No, no, my dear girl, you do not,” interposed the young man quickly, lifting her chin and looking at her with a gaze she could not misinterpret, “You only think you care for this one, other than your betrothed. You are too easily influenced; it will work to your own evil if you are not careful. Don’t cry; this one is unworthy a tear, a thought of your kind heart. Go in, dear, and say your prayers for him; he needs them.”

His meaning was unmistakable this time. She sprang from him stung to her woman’s pride.

“Hs is as worthy my thoughts as his sister is of yours. If he follows me, I just guess it ain’t no worse than her a-followin’ you right up to the last minute she was here. Oh, you needn’t frown. Folks knows it—how you two was till most mornin’

gettin' down from the mill that time last summer. And didn't she ride up to the lodge next day, on the supply wagon, like common folks, when she knew you'd walked up, when she knew it was goin' to storm and you'd have to stay all night as you did with only deaf old Davis—"

"Stop, Ruth Bradley!" Paul's face looked white through the gloom, and his voice shook. "You are repeating what you know is false. Ask Max or Luis or any of the Lower Ranch men where I spent that night. Ask my mother. Gossip has gone far when it couples Miss Eldreth's name with one of her father's men; and you are going to stop it—your part of it. Shame, Ruth! Where is your self-respect, your womanhood, your sympathy with your own sex? And you a teacher, a Christian, a follower of the Golden Rule!"

"*Hola!* you two!"

Antonio Garia sprang from his spent broncho at the very gate before either was aware of his proximity. Ruth turned deathly white, and shrank close to her companion, for she knew her betrothed's temper; but he only laughed while he tied his horse, bantering:

"Now, Señor Menendez, if you think you are through with my sweetheart, I'll be much obliged for an hour or so and a kiss or two, if you've left any—no?"

Paul turned him a frankly smiling face. "Plenty. I'm ordinarily courageous, but not so foolhardy as to covet Señor Garia's belongings. I was just leaving. Good-night, and good-bye to you both. I am no longer foreman of Eldhurst. I leave for Ward tomorrow night to manage the Hopeful."

"Yes, he was scolding me," pouted Ruth, leaning listlessly against Antonio's broad shoulder and absently toying with his revolver hilt, "But he brought me home and he called me his 'dear girl.' Aren't you jealous?"

"Not a little bit," laughed her lover, hugging her up to him with a bear-like squeeze. "Why that poor fellow is so in love with the Boss's daughter that he doesn't know if there's another girl in Boulder county. And a man that can get the highest rose on the trellis isn't even going to see the violets on the ground—no?"

"But he can't get her; it's too high up."

"Sometimes even climbing roses will trail. If you'd have seen her up there in the woods when she thought I had hurt him. And they didn't know I looked back. I saw her hanging onto his arm and looking up at him like . . . like . . . Well, no pretty girl had better ever look at me so, that's all! *Diantre!* Can't get her! He's a damn fool if he doesn't take her for half an asking. I would, if I had to plant the rest of the family."

"He can't, he can't," repeated the girl, pressing her hand fiercely against that torn letter in her bosom. Ah, she knew a way to "fix things" between Paul and the Boss's daughter, and who would blame her for playing even with a man who had as good as told her that he cared nothing for her—her, Ruth Bradley, the prettiest girl in all Eldhurst. (Mr. Richard had told her she was.) Very good, Paul Menendez, you have no taste for violets; you shall have no chance at roses. Aloud she said poutingly:

"I know. You think her prettier than me; you and Paul both think so."

His honest hesitation was sufficient answer, though he said reflectively: "It must be the dress that makes the difference. She can certainly get herself up stunningly. Some think Miss Howard the most beautiful, but she's too cold; a dead pearl beside a fire-opal."

"Humph! Maybe you'd like to cut Paul out for the climbing rose?" And she writhed out of his arms and flirted off to the other side of the gate.

He recaptured and kissed her severely before he replied: "Not I. What would I do with a fine lady? Put her up in the niche beside my Virgin and say prayers to her? And what would she do with me? Being used as a door-mat might prove uncomfortable. Paul's different. His mother

worked for the Allans and knows gentle ways; and as to his father, Max says that Manuel Menendez was no peon, for all he lived one, and Max ought to know the castes of his own country."

"Well, I don't care," sulked the girl, "You and Paul can just think Miss Eldreth and Miss Howard prettier than me. I know who doesn't think so, and I mean to flirt with him first chance I get, see if I don't."

"You try it! Saints on high! try it—only once!" he hissed, locking his sinewy brown hands round her plump throat and shaking her threateningly. "Women have died for less than that—my own mother died for less! And I am my father's son. *Si, si!*"

"Tony!" she gasped, fear in her eyes, "it wasn't me you said you'd kill—it was him."

"Don't make me do either," he said gloomily, as he turned toward house.

The next day when Paul came to talk with Bradley about taking personal charge of the Hopeful, and while he was waiting for her father, Ruth, smiling and unconcerned, asked him to address an envelope to Miss Eldreth in Boston. One of the mission school children wanted to send her a birthday card, she said.

And Paul, wholly unsuspecting, complied with her request.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON.

MATTERS at Eldhurst went rapidly from bad to worse that spring. Half a score of experienced men declined to work under another foreman, and frankly stated so when they asked for their time. One foreman after another was tried, first some stranger, next some one from the place.

While Max was trying to make his experience as head-shepherd stand good for the handling of men and the other lines—agriculture, lumbering and quarrying—Luis, in charge of the flocks of the Lower Ranch, let a bunch of lambs go down in a freshet; scores were dying from some baffling affection and, late as it was, the shearing was not yet arranged for. Max promptly straightened most of these matters when, excused from the foremanship, he again gave his attention exclusively to the sheep.

The next three men were failures, each more emphatically so than his predecessor. Whenever Mr. Eldreth ventured to absent himself there were looseness and shirking, in spite of the efforts of the sub-formen, and, most demoralizing of all, there

was no recognized authority, no final court of appeal.

And Mr. Eldreth's absences grew more frequent and more lengthy. He was absorbing himself in politics, and it was whispered that his ambitions stopped nowhere short of the United States senate.

The fifth experiment as foreman was a stranger from the far East, wholly unaccustomed to Western ways and Western men. He had been a crew-boss in the Allegheny coal mining districts, and was domineering enough to suit even Pierce Eldreth. But he knew nothing of growing crops under irrigation; the mills under his foremanship kept lowering their average output, and finally, in desperation, Eldreth assumed direct management of his two big ranches, himself, placing this Pennsylvania man, Schmidt, in charge of the quarries when Bradley resigned in May.

At once the output of the quarries ran up, greatly to Eldreth's gratification. What did it matter that the men were discontented and grumbling? Schmidt could hold them down. Thank the Lord there was one little corner of Eldhurst to which he did not have to run every day. Wagner had always to be watched more or less closely; the Lower Ranch had to be gone over just so often; and there was Webb losing man after experienced man and it was such a hard ride up to the lumber camp,

Late in April the Greeley paving bids were opened and the contract went to the Lyons quarries. Eldreth immediately laid off half the force at his quarries. This while Bradley was still in charge; and it had required all of his and the Rector's persuasion in the union's called meeting to keep the other half from laying down their tools. Unbeknown to Eldreth, Paul was called down from Ward to go to the mill and talk to the union there, to prevent Webb's resignation and the trouble that seemed in the very air.

The latter part of May, Eldreth received private word from reliable sources that the Springs paving contract would probably go to an Eastern concern; and he forthwith announced that there would be a cut in wages at the quarries.

Bradley and Paul were both at Ward now (for the Hopeful was breaking her record), Webb, as it chanced, was in Denver, and Allan was ill, confined to his bed. Schmidt had kept the men at work, it is true, but there were complaints and threats and open talk of a strike.

There was to be a called meeting of the quarries' union for Saturday, when the matter would be brought up; and the Rector lifted his burning head and trembling hand long enough to pencil a note to Paul, detailing the explosive situation, and begging him to come down for that Saturday meeting to

counteract the influence of Andersen and Swenssen and Garia and the other hotheads.

Paul came down from Ward Thursday morning, and had a long reassuring talk with his old teacher. Certainly he would do his utmost toward peace. Already he had seen for a few moments Andersen and others of the ultra element up in Quarry Town and he believed they would listen to reason. Nothing would be decided upon till Saturday evening's meeting which he, Paul, had been asked to address. He had also been asked to act as mediator between the men and their employer. Schmidt was very unpopular, and Mr. Eldreth at best was greatly misunderstood and misrepresented; but he would do his best.

When Paul left the sick room, promising to remain at Eldhurst as late as possible Saturday night, Edwin Allan breathed a long sigh, turned over and sank into his first refreshing sleep for weary days and nights.

Thursday, the first in June, was the day Lilys was expected home from Boston. Paul had scarcely returned from the Rector's bedside and seated himself in the cottage porch where his mother sat sewing, when William pulled the carriage up before the Rectory door.

Marah watched her son's eyes wander from the unturned pages of his "Mining Laws" to where a

trim brown-clad figure was disappearing within the Rectory.

After some delay, the carriage climbed the steep hill to the House. They could see Wagner's band of hay-hands, skirting the hill's base toward the barns, stop and wave their hats in salute to the Little Mistress, in response to which the trim brown figure rose in the carriage beside her father and fluttered a handkerchief.

When the carriage stopped at the block, they could see Helene, Lena, Pepito, Sam and the others surround it, and the brown figure was lost among them.

Marah made a sudden little movement; Paul lifted his eyes and, catching her expression, bent over his book with a show of sudden interest, the dark blood mounting to his face.

"You will see her?" queried his mother.

The young man shook his head. Scant confidence was there between mother and son, less sympathy.

"I go to the mill tomorrow to a meeting of their union; Saturday to the meeting of the quarries union, after an interview with Mr. Eldreth, and the same night back to Ward if I can make the train. I promised Bradley, who can not be at the mine."

Marah looked him over scornfully. Were her cherished plans to be defeated, after all, by this

strong-willed boy? Leaning back and swaying to and fro in her rocker, she sang in her matchless voice:

“‘So in that purple twilight my heart was overcome,  
By the breath of your song, and I loved you though my  
tongue was dry and dumb.  
For you were a high-born LADY, and why should you  
care for me?  
So I stole away not knowing you were singing to me—  
to me.”

But the song and the taunting laugh which ended it served merely to deepen the red in the fair face bending above “Mining Laws.”

“When will you see her?” persisted his tormentor, “You can not always avoid it.”

Paul arose, putting down his book. “When he can take my hand as an equal; when the name I bear is no longer a reproach; when I have conquered this cursed blood in my veins.”

“Such blood is strong.”

The lines about his mouth deepened. “Will is stronger.”

“And a name once stained—”

“May be cleansed.”

Her shoulders lifted. “I’m afraid you’ll find it’s fast colors; hand-dyed in the wool. Time may fade it; but even so, there remains, will always remain,

that unproffered hand of his. Therefore, you may have to content yourself with viewing her from the porch."

"That is very probable."

Marah cut her thread with a vicious whack of the scissors, her lip curling disdainfully. "Oh, the Eldreths! they are *so high*! They point with pride to an unbroken line back, far back to—is it William the Conqueror or Atilla Scourge of God? This on the paternal side; while on the distaff side, there is the immortal Samuel Blue-blood Huntington, Signer of the Great Declaration, be it ever remembered. So much for the Eldreths. As for the Allans—" lifting mocking eyes to heaven, "the Allans owned and sailed the Mayflower, won the battle of Bunker Hill and hold a first mortgage on Plymouth Rock. The living representatives of this noble combination should adopt as their coat of arms a Pilgrim father *passant* on a field of alfalfa, opposed to a Swedish stone-cutter rampant. Bah! your walking delegate quoted it pat in that last speech of his: 'The man who has nothing to boast but his illustrious ancestry is like the potato—the only good belonging to him is underground.'"

Even this brought no response, only a half smile.

"And besides, if a woman chooses to stoop, who shall say no?" she challenged.

He came and stood before her, saying with stern

emphasis: "Her unborn children, her very choice himself, if he be not too weak, too blind, too mad."

The woman reddened, but flung back: "And a man may be safely trusted to be all three, where a beautiful woman is concerned."

"There are men who have no right to women, beautiful or otherwise, much less to children, cursed before birth."

"You preach well. The practice remains to be seen. You have never been tested. You are a disciple of the immaculate Edwin Allan, but you are none the less your father's son. I have told you before that you are like him."

Yes, she had told him before—had missed no opportunity; and now, as always, he flinched as the lash descended upon the same unhealed wound. But where he had heretofore borne the sting in silence, now he said with quiet determination:

"Well, I shall be unlike him in one respect."

His mother laughed scoffingly. "Oh, you will, will you? Yes, yes, the man is strong and ah! so virtuous when he views her from the porch. But find the woman, set them face to face, turn the key, lower the lights and then, my word for it, the resemblance to his honored sire will be quite complete. Oh, I know what you're thinking," as his face set like stone, "but you are mistaken. What have the man and his resolutions to do with it? It may take

two to make a business bargain, but for a love bargain it takes only one, and that one the woman. Do you imagine that Manuel Menendez ever dared to confess his love for me, much less propose marriage? No. He was content to view me from the sheep-corral until—mark, now!—until I was ready.”

Her son stared at her in a horror of amazement. The small common ground between them quaked and was rent anew; the opening gaped wider than before.

“So you see, when Miss Eldreth gets ready to stoop—”

He made a quick dissenting gesture and turned toward his chair.

“You think it impossible? that she cares nothing for you?”

“Pray, let us discuss it no further,” he requested coldly, reaching for his book.

“One question, and I have done. You are at liberty not to answer.”

He had begun searching for his place in the “Laws,” but he left off and gave her polite attention. His mother fixed him with her piercing eyes, leaning forward and emphasizing by beating her scissors on the chair-arm.

“If this is so one-sided, why did she cling to me that night of the storm when you brought her here, weeping and begging not to be taken away from me;

why did she kiss me again and again there in the dark—and *call me by your name?* WHY?”

The book fell to the floor. Paul sat down weakly, covering his face.

The relentless voice went on: “Why did she refuse to be taken from your bed, and why—?”

“Don’t, mother, don’t!” The whisper was replete with physical pain.

“And when I had undressed her and put her under the covers, why did she cry herself to sleep clasping your pillow, and lie all night with her lips against it? Why—”

“Oh—God! *Stop!*”

Marah too had risen, the wild light flaring up in her eyes. “‘Impossible’ you say? Fool! say rather ‘inevitable.’ One-sided? with her marked, branded with love-longing; conceiving with the one image love-traced in the darkness; passion her food, her drink, her life.”

She turned and moved from him, both arms flung high, rambling on incoherently: “Set apart for him alone,—her arms for his neck, her head for his breast, her lips for his lips. What can he do with his will, his resolutions, his prayers? or they with their petty social distinctions? Not heaven can thwart it, nor the devil and all his angels. What was to be shall be. Then, so *he* but see it, let me die! Marah Maitland never—”

It ended in a violent paroxysm of coughing, as Paul, following, caught her in his arms, and, forgetting his own misery, he soothed her with a woman's tenderness. She tried feebly to push him away, but he sat down, in her rocker, holding her against his breast as he might a child, the light of a great pity in his eyes.

Once she shuddered away from him, muttering; but the next instant she took his face between her thin hands and kissed his lips with feverish intensity, then hid her face down on his shoulder. And he held her close and strong till she fell asleep; sat long, gazing with eyes that ached and blurred across at the House on the opposite hill, thinking sad, perplexed thoughts.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## LOVE AGAINST PRIDE.

IF Pierce Eldreth had experienced an unaccountable thrill as he stood before that portrait at Christmas time, he underwent something like a shock when he met his daughter on the up-train from Denver that June morning. She seemed taller, though her form was fuller, the very perfection of womanly beauty. Her wealth of hair was coiled becomingly, and there was a graceful, fetching air, a regal bearing about her which she certainly had not taken away with her.

During their stop at the Rectory, her uncle had sat up in bed and embraced her affectionately, assuring her that she had not changed from his little girl of a year ago; but his heart went faint within him at sight of her rich dark beauty.

Greetings over at the House, she returned to sit with him. As she passed down the hill, she stole a glance toward Marah's cottage. She had heard Antonio tell Pepito that he and Paul were going to the lumber camp tomorrow to return Saturday morning. Then he must be at Eldhurst now. . . .

She colored angrily and walked rapidly on to the door of the open church. Here she was, fresh from a gay social season in the East, enriched by new friends and a broader experience, with the wide world of Music spread out to invite her future—here was she, at home but a few hours, staring up at the hut he called home, sighing like some love-sick kitchen-maid, asking herself as to the whereabouts of one who— She banged the vestry door with something of her old-time vehemence.

In the dim church, she paused to draw from her pocket a crumpled letter sheet, traced in a delicate German hand:

“You will come back to us, Rose of the West, for what were life without you? A year more here for us both, then to mein loved Berlin—and then? God be thanked, your ‘No’ was qualified. You will *try* to love me, you said. Relent and let me come to you there in your big West so I may help you to try.

Ah, we were all so proud of you last night. Your voice was superb. Living or dying, I shall hear it. That last encore—why did you choose that particular one? It was tearful with farewells, a dirge of sundering ties. Yet—was I mistaken?—under and below ran a current of gladness, the gladness of outspread wings, the joy of home-returning, the thrill of fond expectation. So my violin sings when I am glad in spite of myself.

All the others were weeping because of your

‘Farewell ! farewell ! No word we know  
So full of love, so full of woe.’

but I because of that little joy-note ; for it roused my old fear that there is another, one more worthy, one better beloved. Oh, tell me that my fear is groundless !

Devotedly yours,  
J. von B.”

She crumpled the letter impatiently and moved slowly up the darkened church, passing so close to the young man behind the arch near the door that he might have reached out and touched her. (Dissatisfied already with ‘viewing her from the porch’ !)

She went to the side door next the Rectory and called to her uncle through his open window :

“I’m going to try my wings in the little old choir-loft again. Can you hear ? It will either kill or cure.”

But she did not ascend at once. She sauntered about, examining with childish interest the old familiar objects, the altar-cloth, the portraits and the stained windows. Longest of all she stood gazing up at the life-sized portrait of Madame Emelie Huntington-Eldreth, with its lofty brow and dreamy, haunting eyes.

They were *his* eyes. The resemblance was more than fancied. The whole face was his—it seemed so to-day more than ever—feature for feature :

"A mouth for mastery and manful work,  
A certain brooding sweetness of the eyes,  
A brow, the harbor of grave thoughts, and hair  
Saxon of hue."

And it had been by just such a dim light that she had been held by that last unforgotten gaze, there on the rain-drenched hillslope, now a year ago. She had swooned, yet she had been dimly conscious of what followed. All that night and during the tedious journey eastward, she had reviewed those few crisis moments. She recalled the blackness, the dizzy, sinking sensation; then strong arms had lifted her, carried her . . . And then? She strove for more. Had he kissed her? Had he *dared*? Ay, her lips had throbbed and burned all the hours of that long night as she tossed about on his bed. She had dreamed that he had dared; had dreamed it many and many a night—and she had not always been asleep when she dreamed it!

She had neglected her traveling companions, particularly DeLacy, who had suddenly grown unbearable to her; she had cared little for change of scene, for the new life, even for music. She sought solitude. She wanted to be much alone with this new and wonderful awakening of her woman nature. She strove to live again the transition moments of her awakening. Over and again in memory she

felt the magnetic strength of his arms enfolding her as though never to let her go; the strokes of the heart against which she had lain, the pressure of his smooth sensitive lips on her mouth, stinging her swooning senses back to life with all the shock and ecstasy of love's first kiss. And in this memory (purely physical, for, unlike him, she never idealized) she luxuriated with all the intensity of her tropical temperament, till, hugged nightly to her unsatisfied heart, it grew to be a sweet torment—her one lover's one caress.

Her lover, her "low-born lover"! How her pride had risen and struggled with her heart those first few months, till she grew weary of the ceaseless strife. On the one side birth, position, pride, thought of her father, of her world. On the other side their boy-and-girl days and the memory of them, his gentleness and protection; then those last swift days, the thrill of his touch, the deep splendor of his eyes, the haven of his arms, the sweetness and fire of his kiss. O futile strife, old as the heart is old!

When her pride was ascendant, she prayed to meet him once more, only once; that she might freeze, wither, crush him and his presumption in having dared to look at her, his master's daughter, with that look in his eyes. Then when her love swung uppermost, she had scarcely the strength to

repress the longing that had sprung full-grown in her passionate soul at the one touch of his lips, the mad yearning to return to him, to cast herself at his feet and in the ecstasy of self-abandonment be wholly his, defiant of position, father, the world and its laws.

Her homesickness, her loyalty to the "big West," and all things Western had been her heart's allies. And one day when she was more homesick than usual, she had written (realizing that he would never take the initiative and why), just a kind little letter, altogether friendly, about the ranch and the mission school and how she meant to help him, if she might, and in others ways to be a better girl.

How would he reply? Did he care? She had not succeeded in breaking his self-command that last night. Could it be that his indifference was genuine? No, no. Scores of trifling circumstances recurred to her mind in contradiction. He had loved her all his life; but she had position and wealth, and so his pride had kept him silent and would till the end of time, unless . . . .

Then his letter had come, quite promptly, his unmistakable handwriting. It had lain on the piano till she finished her lesson and her vocal master was gone. Then she had seized and opened it greedily, to find—her own letter torn into careful strips, and not a word besides.

Ah, heaven's mercy! She had gone wild then. In her mad determination to "do something desperate, something for which he'd be sorry," she fully resolved upon an immediate acceptance of Herbert DeLacy, upon the shameless waiting with him for his legal release.

But some guardian spirit had directed that DeLacy be out of Boston for the fortnight, and upon his return, at first sight of him, her revulsion of feeling was complete.

Next she intentionally encouraged another long-insistent suitor, a handsome young virtuoso, a fellow-student in the conservatory who had already distinguished himself as an amateur violinist. He was altogether desirable from everybody's standpoint—wealthy, high-born, in fact allied to the nobility itself; and he and Richard had become fast friends during her brother's visit to Boston.

With true Western frankness she assured him that she "wanted to love him," and "would try hard!" But alas! love does not come even by hard trying. And besides, love was already securely enthroned. No, not her distinguished foreign suitor. No, she, Lily Eldreth, heaven-and-earth-favored, born to the social purple, she loved one of her father's hired men, no birth, no blood, worse than no name, with the shadow of a gibbet over his life! one low enough and vulgar enough and insulting

enough to tear and return a lady's letter. Oh, the humiliation of it turned her sick.

Yet that same night, perhaps, she would dream of pattering rain, of a darkened room, of an embrace from whose passionate strength her father was trying vainly to withdraw her; and she would wake to weep out her loneliness and heart-sickness, to pray to die if only first she might once more feel the clasp of his arms, the pressure of his lips. Ah, if the struggle had been sharp before the episode of the returned letter, afterward it was fierce, to the death. For if her pride was undying, her heart admitted no defeat.

But as she now stood in the darkened church, she told herself that pride had fully conquered; that it was ended. Never again to see him—that was all she asked of heaven.

And all the while, Paul was studying with wildly beating heart, the changes a year had made in her: greater suppleness of movement, fuller redness of lips, a deeper, more subdued light in the eyes and the subtle, irresistible aura of the full-blown woman breathing about her. Her dress clung to her more rounded figure in the same graceful, individual way. Were she a princess she could not hold herself more royally. Her whole dark passionate beauty was intensified by a something he hesitated to name. Was it that she had suffered? Heaven forbid! and

a great wave of protective tenderness swept him at the mere thought. Whatever the agent, her always potent attraction for him was increased many fold, and holding there to the arch, he registered an inconsidered vow to return to Ward and to safety at the earliest possible moment.

She ascended to the gallery and he held his breath expectantly. But she did not sing, only took a tone, swelled it softly in a gradual crescendo, held it with purity and power and let it throb away through a slow diminuendo, like the dying intonation of a rich-toned bell. Then she came down the steps, trilling some light staccato notes softly as she moved, shaking out the liquid tones into the stillness of the church like the bubbling cadence of a nightingale. Lastly, she took the octave tone above and ran back, the eight golden notes gliding down one into the other, "a brook of silvery laughter through the air."

It meant nothing to the watching man when she paused with hands grasping the side-rail and stood looking again for a full minute up at the portrait of her grand-dame; but when she was safely across the Rectory yard and in the house, he went down on his knees before the portrait, his lips pressed upon the side-rail where it was still warm from her hands.

For some time Lilys sat reading and chatting with

her uncle and when by and by he dozed, she remained at his side, idly reading a magazine article, a short vivid allegory, "The Potency of Love." How a forester had planted a climbing Rose between a straight young Poplar and a stunted Oak; how, because the Rose leaned to the stunted tree for her earlier support and because of the Oak's jealous anxiety lest one fiber of her being find support other than his own strength, the dwarf Oak had straightened and strengthened and striven upward. In the end the forester had come, bent on destruction, had untwined the tender clasp of the young Rose and given her to the more favored Poplar, but so improved was the Oak that he had changed his mind about the intended destruction.

She reread the article, for there was something oddly familiar in the phraseology, glanced at the author's name and when her uncle awoke, asked:

"Uncle Edwin, I have been thinking: If there is so much power in love, as some claim, why doesn't Dix's love for Nina do more for him? And why did not papa's love for mama make a better man of him, a man like you? Some one has said that we grow like what we worship."

Her questions told him how great was the change in her. A year ago she would not have asked them.

"But there are so many kinds of love," he said in reply, "as many kinds as there are individual

temperaments. Your father was proud of your mother, admired, respected, deferred to her; but his heart's strongest love had already been lavished upon his first . . . his . . . upon Richard's mother. As to Richard, you are now old enough to understand that he loves even so excellent a woman, in the thoroughly masculine way, that is, selfishly, sensually. It is singular," he mused, "that the men of the house of Eldreth for generations back have had the power of inspiring love in women morally their superiors,—from your brother's fiancée back to Emelie Huntington's mother's mother,—in each case a love but little short of tragic in its capacity for blind devotion. Such power of rousing to utter self-effacement seems inherent in the Eldreth blood. The history of your house proves it. But you ask me why such love for such women has done no more for these men. 'We grow like what we worship' is but a half truth. While the object of our love in part determines the kind of love, yet the nature of the person loving has more to do with it than the person beloved. In the cases you mention, worthy objects are loved unworthily. On the other hand, many unworthy ones are loved far beyond their deserving, this being invariably true where the soul of the worshiper is pure and given to idealizing.

Dante created a poet's dream from a flesh-and

blood woman; and I have in mind an obscure modern instance in some points resembling the case of the immortal Florentine. This humble lover's is likewise a poet's soul, his love a lonely, subjective passion; its object invested with ideal virtues as entirely his own creations as are the verses of his making. He loves love and the woman both in one, love in his high conception of it. She will ever remain in ignorance of his adoration, but whatever her merit, he will always hold her more than worthy, and will strive himself to deserve the heights on which he has placed her. Thus will his great unrequited love work to his own good as truly as though she were worthy of it and reciprocal. To his greater good, it may be, *because* unrequited; for 'oftimes the thing our life misses helps more than the thing that it gets.' Besides, it is the loving that is beneficial, not possession of the beloved."

His answer told her much; more than her questions had told him; far more than he intended. There was a strange sparkling light in her eyes, a vivid spot on either cheek. She arose slowly, laid aside the magazine and reached for her parasol which she had brought in lieu of a hat. The Rector smothered a sigh of relief. What if she had guessed at his meaning!

"Uncle," she asked with abrupt irrelevance, "who is 'Allan Marsden?'"

He colored and stammered, seeking to frame a reply at once truth and evasive; but she gave him one swift, enlightened glance, then said in a tone of unspeakable bitterness:

“Your poet-lover is to be congratulated upon all that his well-controlled spiritual love has wrought for himself. He has seen to it that this ethereal passion shall benefit no one else; but it must be admitted that his preventive measures could never have originated in the heart of a *gentleman*. Even from the view-point of unworthy flesh-and-blood, he is—*a coward*. Tell him so.”

And before the astonished, bewildered Rector could open his lips, she was gone.

Paul was untying his horse in front of the church as the girl came out. Instead of passing out of the Rectory gate, her nearest way, she went round through the church-yard and down past the hitching-rack.

The eyes of the two met; hers looked beyond him, over him, through him, but saw him not; and with proudly lifted head, she passed him in freezing silence.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## READING BETWEEN LINES.

"MAMMA HELENE," complained Lilys late the next afternoon, "talk to me, tell me something. I'm so . . . . It is so . . . ."

She sat down listlessly at her old nurse's feet and leaned her head wearily in her lap. She had left Lena to finish unpacking the several trunks, and slipping into her thinnest, coolest Vassar gown, had joined the housekeeper who sat sewing in the west veranda. The House was deserted; a summer quiet hung over the entire place.

"So—what, dearie?" and Helene lovingly stroked the flossy hair and patted the soft cheek and neck, "You aren't homesick for Boston and the tenderfoot beau already?"

Lilys made a wry face. "I should say not! You know I never wanted to leave; and there hasn't been an hour during the past year that I haven't been homesick for home and all of you. I only meant," and involuntarily her eyes sought the lone cottage on the left hill opposite, "that things here at Eldhurst now are so . . ." She absently slipped

the rings from her fingers, piled them into one hand, and shifted them from palm to palm. "Well, so . . . different, you know."

"I don't think you'll find it so, dearie. Nothing and nobody has changed up here. Fred is coming from Denver next week to practice with Nina for the Chautauqua, since you think you can't go with her. And even after the wedding, week after next, Dickie'll be right here the same as ever, and how nice it will be for you girls to be together. And you'll have company this summer same as ever and a nice time; so how will it be different? Things have changed some over there," nodding toward Quarry Town, "Bradley's resigned, and Schmidt's in his place. Gustav married Hilma—did you know?—and it was high time he did, I should say. Ruth's living with the Schmidts till her father's ready for her, or till she's married. Paul's at Ward and will soon take his mother——"

"That's what you can talk to me about, Mamma Helene," put in Lilys, "Tell me about Marah, all you know about her, and let me ask questions. Papa and Dix won't be up to dinner for an hour. Uncle always puts me off, but you shall not."

Helene fastened her thread and bit it off before speaking. "Ain't much to tell. She was a servant like the rest of us, only the Allans made much of her and she got spoiled. She sang in the choir

and sat in the Rectory parlor sometimes. It was just before they hired her that the old master, your grandpa, died, and your Pa came here to take hold of things. Dickie was about two years old; and had been sent here to live after his mother died somewhere in the South. I never saw her, and your Pa never talked about her, though I know he must have thought a sight of her."

"Uncle says he loved her better than he did my Mamma."

"Well, if she was any prettier and nicer than Miss Edith, she must have deserved it; for Miss Edith was an angel, so sweet and gentle, yet proud and high-notioned enough to suit your Pa all right. After she came to the Rectory, where Mr. Eldreth had gone often enough, for he always liked Mr. Allen, now he went more than often, and we all knew why.

One night, after Miss Edith had been home about six months, Manuel Menendez and I were out there in the garden. Manuel was head-shepherd and belonged at the Lower Ranch, but he used to be up here a good deal. Talk about good-looking men! That Spaniard had them all beaten; for Max says he was a Spaniard and no Mexican. There wasn't a girl at Eldhurst but would have followed him round for one look from those black eyes of his, for all there was some very good reason why he

had left his own country. Well, as I said, we were out in the garden and your Pa came walking up from the Rectory. He saw us and stopped and said:

“ ‘Fix it up here at the House, Helene, for I’m going to bring you home a mistress soon.’ ”

“ ‘Yes, sir, that I will,’ I says, and he went on in.

“ ‘Wonder which one?’ whispers Manuel, and I’ve always thought your Pa heard him, for how he did turn against Manuel after that! ”

“What did he mean by ‘which one’?” interrupted Lilys.

“Why, Miss Edith or Marah.”

“What! my mother or her maid?”

“Just so. You see, once in a great while, before Miss Edith came, Mr. Eldreth used to take Dickie down to the Rectory, and as I told you, Marah was allowed in the parlor. Dickie took a great liking to her, used to run away and go down there; the only thing your Pa ever spanked him for. Manuel told me (you can believe it or not) that he’d seen Mr. Eldreth and Marah Maitland out driving together after dark. But Manuel from the first time he ever set eyes on her, was so in love with Marah that he was jealous of—Mr. Allan! Being Spanish, I guess that was nature. But I always made allowances for what Manuel saw and heard about Marah.

“Well, the very next night I was inside, and I

couldn't help hearing some voices outside in the porch here. It was Mr. Eldreth and Manuel, and Manuel was saying:

" 'I'm going to house-keeping myself tomorrow,' says he, and then I did listen, and I could see through the blinds. Your Pa was sitting smoking. He laughed and said: 'That's a good arrangement, for it keeps you here and her too, if that will suit you—right here at the House, I mean. She can still be housekeeper and you can run things at the Lower Ranch.' What? Why, of course he meant me. Manuel had been hanging round the House for months. But——

" 'It's Marah,' says Manuel.

" 'Good God!' says Mr. Eldreth, jumping up, 'That's a lie!' He said worse than that; he swore awful, and his face was like this sheet, and his eyes were terrible.

" 'No, it's not,' Manuel says, his eyes a-glittering too, 'ask her.'

" '*You—you* have dared to make love to *her*, when you knew—' 'Not I,' breaks in Manuel, and he was the coolest of the two. 'She's known I've wanted her; she didn't need to be told. Late to-night while you were still at the Rectory she called me. I was at the gate. And I don't need to tell you that I went to her. What was said is our own business; but she is to be mine—all mine. *Mañana*,

*mañana*,' he kept saying and smiling so that his white teeth showed. '*Mañana's*' the Spanish for 'tomorrow,' you know.

"Then Mr. Eldreth he laughed and laughed. It wasn't right laughing, but awful to listen to.

" 'I congratulate you,' he says.

"Manuel shrugged his shoulders and says what I didn't hear all of, but something about it being in Spanish nature to give a woman about as much as in English nature.

"Mr. Eldreth quit laughing and came close to the other man and his fists doubled together.

" 'You know what I can do—or rather stop doing,' he says in a queer tone. I never did know what he meant, but those were his words.

"Manuel got pale and his eyes glittered more, but he stood up very straight and looked your Pa right in the eyes and says he:

" 'Yes, I know. But you can't keep me from *living* while I live. So do it, and be——' You know just how men talk when they're excited. It was about even between them, for if Mr. Eldreth looked like a lord, Manuel looked a prince. And I was so afraid they'd quarrel worse that I interrupted them.

"Manuel told truth, though nobody knows to this day if there was a wedding. The very next day she left the Allans and went to live with him

there on the hill. And the next day came the wedding at the Rectory, with only Sarah and me as witnesses. And then the next day was Sunday, the last time Marah sang in the choir, or went to church, for that matter. I was there to take care of Dickie, and I had an awful time with him, for when Marah came down the aisle past the Eldreth pew, he just kicked and cried after her till your Pa had to take him. I never could do much with Dickie, you know.

“Well, none of us more than caught sight of Marah for most a year. There was them two girls that had lived together so long, married in a day of each other, homing right in plain sight, and never once speaking. Poor work I made trying to take Marah’s place with your Ma’s clothes and hair. She told me more than once. ‘You’re good, Helene,’ she’d say in her sweet way, ‘but you’re not Marah.’

“The wedding was in May, and it was along about February that Manuel was . . . killed, you know. Some of the mill-hands found him, and he was brought down and buried up there by their cottage. Your Pa didn’t go a-near, and wouldn’t let any of us; though, if it hadn’t been your Ma was as she was; I believe she’d have gone to Marah in spite of your Pa, for I tell you she had a will of her own. But her baby was about to come,—you—and then she says to me, ‘Oh, Helene, I must have

Marah now. She's such a good nurse. Tell her to forget it all and come to me. I may never get up.' For she was always delicate-like.

"Your Pa had been called to Pueblo some days before and he did n't get home till the day after you was born, too late to see your Ma alive.

"I went up after Marah myself, an awful stormy March day, and she was pale and poorly herself. Come to find out she'd a baby of her own three or four days old, not a living soul with her the whole time. It had been storming nearly a week. But bad as she felt, she says 'I'll go,' and goes in and gets her baby and starts. I hurried on down after Mr. Allan; your Ma had asked for him; but he was at Howard's, and by the time I got up there against the storm, got him and we reached here, it was all over. There laid your Ma with you by her and she was too far gone to speak to poor Mr. Allan, though she did try so hard.

"You know the rest; how your Pa came next day too late, and all about the funeral with flowers and telegrams from everywhere; for I've told you time and again. There's your Pa and Dickie now and you aren't dressed yet for dinner. Run, dearie; men never like to wait, 'specially for their dinner."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## BROTHER AND SISTER.

THROUGHOUT the dinner, Lilys kept looking curiously at her father. So he had loved Paul's mother, better even than he had loved her mother. That accounted for several things, but made as many others mysterious. Throughout the meal, too, she could feel his gaze fixed meditatively upon her face.

As they were about to leave the dining-room, he took first one of her jeweled hands, then the other, and examined her rings, saying laughingly:

"Well, I don't see that big DeLacy diamond. Are we going to have a spinster in the House? You're past twenty-one, Little Mistress."

"Oh, she's turned Bertie down flat," broke in her brother, "wrote me so himself. He's awfully cut up. Then there is the big German ruby, a gift to the Baron's great-great from the Emperor William's great-great. But, all told, she may be waiting for a band of virgin gold from 'The Hopeful,' —eh Babe?"

Since the affair of the letter with Marah, Pierce Eldreth had not once, even in thought, associated

his daughter with his former employe. Now he turned and swept her with his keen glance, while a deep scarlet dyed her face. A year ago she would have railed out at her brother, but now she only clasped her hands before her and seemed on the verge of tears.

"Richard," said his father sternly, "you will apologize to your sister for the insult you have offered her."

With his back to his father and his laughing eyes on his sister's face, the young man made his plea for pardon, kissing her hands in mock humility.

"Now Lilys, come with me," ordered her father.

In the library he faced her angrily.

"What did Richard mean? Why should he connect the name of Lilys Allan-Eldreth with that of one who, till within the past three months, has been one of your father's servants?"

"Oh, I hate him, I hate him! with all my soul, I despise him. Do not speak his name to me, ever," cried the girl vehemently; then in a colder tone, after a pause, "I shall doubtless accept the great ruby, and he will write you when I have written him."

Pierce Eldreth's face beamed with a gratified smile, but he at once proceeded to commit what he would have pronounced the blunder of his life.

"That is well. But some three months ago I was handed a letter addressed to this fellow in your

handwriting. Now that you have spent a year in the East, now that you are a year older and a year wiser, you will thank me when I tell you that I destroyed it on the spot. It was doubtless some trivial order about your belongings here at home; for there could be no other excuse for addressing such as he. But if you have even a kindly feeling toward him, gratitude for services rendered, let it end here once for all. If you ever so much as speak to him, I'll shut you up in St. Mary's so tight you'll never see out. I'm in deadly earnest, girl. I would rather kill you with my own hand than suffer the disgrace of hearing your name linked with that of Marah Maitland's son. You understand me?"

During this entire speech the girl had stood, her face turned from her father. Now at its close, she managed a faint affirmative, in what seemed to him a choked voice. But no sooner had he quitted the room than she went dancing down the hall a very whirl of bubbling animal spirits.

At the dining-room door, she snatched and kissed Helene with all but fatal results to the tray of Haviland the housekeeper bore; then she swooped in upon her unsuspecting brother who leaned against the mantel, rolling a cigarette.

"Oh, Dixie," she cried, flinging herself upon him, "hug me, hug me—quick!"

"Well, holy smoke! you'll keep a second or two,

won't you?" saving his cigarette and moistening down the last edge, "Now try to live while I light it. . . . There! How'll you have it?" putting a languid arm about her shoulders.

"No, here, and both arms, Dix dear. Now squeeze me up, close and hard and strong."

Mechanically he tightened his arms about her waist, the look of a haloed martyr on his face.

"You don't call that hard? I mean a big Western hug, a good-and-plenty hug."

Her brother groaned. "Well, I'm no fruit-press. You remind me of a girl I read about. I'll tell you. Now that Paul's gone you've no one to tell you stories, though I'm afraid I can't fetch his fluent Spanish-American style. Once upon a time a girl had a date (I mean a tryst) with her steady (excuse me,—her knight) up in a hill-cave, something like Hanging Rock, you know——"

"Oh yes, I know. And was it raining and growing dark?"

"Little girls shouldn't interrupt. Well, upon this occasion the girl got there first (they generally do!) and the bear to whom the cave happened to belong was at home, and he knocked on the butting-in of the spoonies—resented the intrusion, you understand. Mr. Bruin sneaked up behind her with both mighty arms extended, grabbed her in a death-grip and hugged till his tongue hung out.

And, would you believe it? that girl just lolled back, pretty much as you're doing now, and murmured: 'Tighter, Bill!' Mr. Bruin fell dead; and the spoonies are handing down his hide to a numerous posterity. Fact. That was a Colorado girl, recently returned from Boston, don't you think?"

"Sure!" laughed Lilys, snuggling in closer and pressing his arm against her side, "Make love to me grizzly fashion, smothery, you know. And swear that you love me, swear it as though you meant it."

"All right," puffing at his cigarette, "How'll you have that? *Mein Gott! ich liebe dich! . . . Dios mio! te amo, te adoro! . . .* Good Lord, but I'm languishing for you! Is that fierce enough for you, Babe?"

"I'm not a babe, thank you. I'm a woman; I'm a spinster; though I shan't stay a spinster longer than—well, two weeks, perhaps only one. That's according."

"Wh-e-w!"

"Oh, kiss me, Dixie, kiss me right on the mouth while I count ten."

"And let my cigarette go out. Hardly. What's all this *tremor cordis* about anyway,—in the name of love's lurid delirium, what? Oh, I see. You want to shut your eyes and make believe it's the other fellow?"

Lilys looked up with joy-brimmed eyes and nodded rapidly.

"Do I look like him?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, you've got your nerve. Come, lean your avoirdupois on the mantel till I catch breath. Bert was sure right: the fellow that gets you will have to make loving his exclusive business and work overtime, or take to the tall uncut. But you'll give him his money's worth now you've waked up. Do you know, you are deuced good-looking, child?"

"Pshaw! that's only a compliment for yourself; every one says we are enough alike to be twins," tip-toeing till her cheek pressed his and turning both faces toward the mantel glass, "and we are alike in a whole lot of other ways, though that's not a very pronounced compliment to myself."

"Oh, we're blood-relation all right—the p-i-o-u-s Huntingtons, you know," making a face at the double reflection. "But you haven't told me who my prospective brother is. The violinist, Baron Von Snigglefritz?"

"Not a baron."

"A count? You're pretty enough and clever enough and rich enough."

"No," impressively, "he is a prince. And oh," tightening her arm about his neck, "I'm so happy!"

Her brother eyed her for symptoms of lunacy.

"Ah, of some microscopic island, sort o' Prisoner-of-Zenda-ish."

"No, of a very important kingdom."

He regarded her suspiciously.

"I believe you're lying; but even supposing. Of course he's the youngest of ten, with nothing on earth but one change of underclothing and some future-perfect prospects."

"He can have anything he wants."

Richard whistled derisively.

"No doubt,—afterwards. You'll hand him a racing yacht and an heir to the throne first year without the asking. But I trust you've made His Highness understand that half, exactly half, of Eldhurst is Brother Dickie's, who'll soon be needing it. Nina's named the day," rolling up his eyes.

But she wasn't listening.

"And he has a divine smile and deep eyes that make your heart thump and heavy gold-brown hair that falls forward and—oh, he's the handsomest creature the gods ever made six feet in his stockings—"

"Then you've seen him with his royal boots off? How shocking!"

Lilys only laughed her girlish cadenza and took up her eulogy:

"And he's b-i-g——"

"And can squeeze you up close and hard and

strong, like Young Corbett or Mr. Bruin. Poor devil! he has my sympathy; for he'll have to make strenuous, no-intermission love twenty-four hours out of every twenty-four, and then some."

"Just won't he, though! O Dixie," half choking him, "I love you and Papa and Nina and Helene and Marah and Pepito—everybody in the whole world, don't you?"

"I'd make a few exceptions to your list; also a few additions."

"And isn't it lovely here at home? See how those beautiful rambler roses have hidden all the lattices of my summer-house——"

"Saved! There comes Nina. Here's where little Dickie makes his escape."

"Dear old Nina! She's coming to practice our duet for Sunday. All right, go. *She'll* kiss me and hug me too."

Richard straightened primly. "She will kiss you just once, a chaste kiss on the forehead, and you may place your arm lightly (mark you!) part way round her waist . . . So; but not for too long a time; for it seems to be in the Eldreth blood to be impulsive and imprudent and impassioned,—and all the other imps. And when it's ten, out you go; door closes automatically, and you'll best be on the proper side of it. Now if it's Turn-sinner-turn music you two are going to perpetrate, you'll kindly excuse me."

But it wasn't sacred music that Lilys trilled as she ran to meet her friend. It was :

For lips will glow and he must not go  
As the wind and wave, Who 'll know, who 'll know  
That I reeled with bliss 'neath my love's warm kiss ?  
If he dares, *who cares ?*

## CHAPTER XXXII.

AN UNPRETENTIOUS CHAMPION OF "COMMON CLAY."

"BUT you can not bear the interview here in your sickroom, Edwin, I'd better go up to the House and have him come to the office," protested Pierce Eldreth, as Pepito waited their decision at the door the next afternoon.

"Oh, yes I can," averred the Rector quickly, "I must know the outcome of this most important conference. These troubles are weighing on my heart. I shall be so thankful to hear the final settlement of them!"

Eldreth turned to Pepito. "Where is he?"

"At home, sir."

"Tell him that Mr. Allan wishes the interview in his room here at the Rectory, and that I can give him a short time. Then order the carriage for five-thirty."

When the door closed, the Rector rose to his elbow and reached for the newspaper on the stand-table. "While we are waiting, I have something to read you which I hope may weigh with you in the

matter at hand, since it says about what I should like to say. You know the workingmen's library was dedicated at Ward this week. Nolan made the dedicatory address. I was to have supplemented him, but was unable to go. Quite a number went up from Denver and Boulder; besides Nolan and his son, there were Ingham and Baxter and Wentworth and some other reporters. John went from here and told me about it. 'Allan Marsden' was in the audience, and when it came to the informal talks toward the close, he was called upon to speak, but declined. Wentworth, as usual, was copy-hunting, and as he shares Nolan's admiration for 'Marsden,' they connived for their own ends. While a party of men waited at the hotel for the down-train, Nolan interviewed the young man; Wentworth and his reportorial pencil did the rest. John said the lad was much in earnest; had no idea he was talking for print; doesn't know it yet. And the newspaperman laughed and said he intended going armed for a while as he always did where the 'interviewed' was so able-bodied and muscular. Here it is. I'll have time for only snatches."

Eldreth knitted his fingers above his head, and looked politely attentive—to put it no stronger.

"'Yes, I have always pleaded the cause of the workingman,'" read the Rector, "'These men who fell the trees and guide the plow, those who hew

and shape the rock, added to the workers in shop and smelter and mine—are they not the very salt of earth,—the masses, the people, the redeeming element, humanity itself? Toil here is the great leveler, labor the great beautifier, despite the bent back, the calloused hands. Labor, all labor, is earnest and holy, and I am thankful that I may call myself a workingman. Why should the axe, the hammer, the hoe and the needle feel themselves degraded beside the bank-hoarded dollar that toils for the usurer?

“ ‘Jesus, the greatest advocate of democracy, chose His Twelve from among the sound, simple men of the people, who in every age, though unlearned, are yet freer from the prejudices and the errors of the time, and are ever more plastic to higher teachings, more sensitive to spiritual impressions than the so-called better class. Jesus, with His “Whosoever” and His “Love thy neighbor” obliterated social distinction once and for all time; and founded the great Brotherhood of Man upon the Rock of Love, against which the gates of hell can not prevail. It is true that as yet the Brotherhood is but a heterogeneous mass, unassimilative, and warring one member upon another. But who despises labor despises man; and who degrades his brother dishonors the Father of All.”

“Here the lawyer interposes, insists that the

thinker will always rise above the mere toiler, and quotes

‘Such hath it been—shall be—beneath the sun,  
The many still must labor for the one.’

and some argument ensues for which I shall not have time. Ending it, Marsden says:

“ ‘It is cause for thanks that somewhere below the “better class” there lies the superlatively “best class,” the fathoms of water under the froth; the solid earth beneath the hanging-gardens. The class that has always maintained the equilibrium; the real, the natural, against the superficial; the class which Nature moulds from her common clay, and makes them living, breathing souls. This is essentially true, for it is with humanity as with the individual. Humanity looks to the tiller of the soil, the plowman, the keeper of the vines, for her renewals, her infusions of red blood. Back to Nature’s sons of the soil, poor old Humanity! So the individual looks to the sunshine, the pure air, the trees, the bird-song, the river’s tale, for his renewals, his reviving impulses. Back to Nature, back to the good green earth, poor worn mortal, for there is enough and to spare in thy Father’s house. Alas for him who hungers not to lie next the ground, face to face with the rugged homeliness of Nature, as well as with her beauties. Alas for him who has not

‘The secret learned  
To mix his blood with sunshine and to take  
The wind into his pulses.’

“Further along, Nolan has this to say: ‘I can not see but that, in this heterogeneous mass of which you spoke, in the Brotherhood which might be, I can not see but that the workingman pulls as hard to the south as the employer pulls to the north. It appears to me a sort of tug-of-war game, with labor at one end of the rope and capital at the other. For instance, on a large estate not so very far from here, the mill and quarry hands insist upon schools; they have organized unions; and our brother Ingham here is right now fostering a law for the shortening of the already short working hours. Now all three things, I happen to know, their employer strongly opposes; yet the schools, the unions and the law will continue to be encouraged by those at the opposite end of the rope.’

“Then Marsden again: ‘I admit that between capital and labor there is enmity where there should be co-operation. The one is dependent upon the other. Take the typical skilled laborer, a stone-cutter, we will say. Work he must have and just compensation for that work. On the other hand, the employer, your friend, of whom you spoke: He cannot shape a sandstone slab, nor a cube of granite. He must have the fruits of the cutter’s

hands and skill, else he loses his profits, the prime object of all capital. These two men are mutually dependent. Really of the two, the cutter is the more independent.

“ ‘As to the three things which your friend opposes, the schools, the unions, the laws—education, organization, legislation: There are no two sides to the first. Surely there is no arguing over the question “Shall a man, high or low, rich or poor, make the most of his God-given faculties.” Is not Carlyle right: “That one man should die ignorant, who has capacity—this I call tragedy”?’

“ ‘Organization is a privilege, a duty of the workman, re-enforcing the individual with the multiplied strength of numbers. A workman is wronged. Individually there might be no redress for him. But the union stands behind each member, saying to the giant corporation with all the reserve-force assurance of a fellow-giant. “Right this wrong else you will find yourself stripped of skilled labor.” Organization is essentially protective.

“ ‘Legislation also is a necessity. The estates you mention have not even the minature conditions held in the congested centres; know little of the horrors of the sweat-shop, of crowded factories, of child-labor, of man’s strength and woman’s life ground into profits for soulless employers. But before the law came and even yet where it comes not,

there have been and are still, we know, the overtime, the midnight needle, "the wearied fibres stretched with toil," manhood degraded, motherhood outraged, childhood enslaved, and all the other nameless wrongs of working hours whose limits are set by selfishness and greed.

" 'I cannot believe that God, who loves us all, created some for the enjoyment of earth's beauties and luxuries—works of art, the sweet serenity of books, travel, leisure, the lovely things of life; and others still for the discomforts, the distortions, the smoke, the close, sunless atmosphere of mines and shops, the narrow path, the bookless home, with never a moment for leisure, with all that is sad and wearing and grinding in an unwelcome existence. May it always be mine to lift a feeble voice for the cause of the workingman, and even in a small way to hasten the day of the eternal Brotherhood, the great democracy, when Love shall be the only law.' "

The Rector folded the paper, a pained look in his eyes as he noted the smile on his brother's face. "I realize as well as you do that the boy has said nothing new, and that you look upon the whole as the gush of youthful enthusiasm. But for the matter of that, neither you nor I can say anything new upon a subject exposed to the search-light of more than one century. At least——"

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## MASTER AND MAN.

THE knock at the door interrupted, and Allen thrust the paper under his pillow.

Paul entered, looking somewhat fatigued, for he was just down from the mill by the sledge-road. The Rector spoke cordially, his glance full of love, and the former employer wayed the new-comer to a chair at the opposite side of the centre-table.

"I owe the honor of this call," began the master of Eldhurst, pushing a vase of flowers from between him and his companion, and fastening a keen glance upon the young man's face, "I owe the honor, I believe, to Lodge Number One, Stone-cutters' Union, Quarry Town, which you are here to represent. Is it not true?"

"It is, sir. At a called meeting of the committee some days ago, I was delegated to see you upon my return. They were hopeful that you might be led to reconsider this second proposed cut of wages."

"If your honorable committee had been about their proper business of drilling and hewing and cutting, they would have had no time for the tomfoolery of called meetings."

"It chances that those composing this committee are among the men laid off," remarked Paul dryly.

Eldreth bit his lip, and there was a pause.

"Why were they hopeful that I might be led to reconsider a once-decided course? Did they think anything *you* might say would influence me?"

The young man colored, but said quietly:

"They entrusted me with information with which you are as yet unacquainted, and with authority to come to an understanding with you."

"An understanding? A compromise—is that what you mean?"

"In a sense, yes, sir."

"Pierce Eldreth compromises only with his equals. Tell them so. When it comes to dealing with his dependents, he dictates, they accept or reject his terms, just as they see fit. The second cut in wages goes on Monday. Schmidt is so instructed."

"They most sincerely trust that you will think better of your decision, sir," remonstrated Paul earnestly.

"Of course they do!" laughed Eldreth. "Touch a workingman's pocket-book if you wish to move him."

"This has gone far deeper. You may not know it, but for the first time in the history of Eldhurst, some of her people have known actual want,

or would have known it but for Mr. Allan and Mr. Howard. The families of the men laid off have been all but destitute."

"Why don't they go elsewhere and work. No one detains them here."

"What can these stone-cutters do within short distances of their homes? The Lyons and the Nolan quarries have all the men they need. Most of the laid-off men are in your debt, and have no desire to evade their obligations. All of them live in your houses and are in debt to your merchant. The greater per cent are men of families, and it costs to move and maintain women and children."

"That's exactly it. Your workingman of the lower class, first of all, knows but one trade; secondly, he is ignorant as a post about the proper expenditure and the saving of money; and thirdly, he is invariably, monotonously, possessed of a large family of small children. Improve him in these particulars and I'll have employes with whom I can reason."

Paul looked up quickly. "For several years past the schools up among them have striven toward these very ends. The manual element has entered as largely as practicable, particularly into the night-school work for adults. Financing has been made as practical as possible, a sort of savings bank has long been maintained with encouraging results; and the

every-day needs of the little community have been carefully studied in the selection of the branches taught. I was under the impression that you tacitly opposed the schools, that they existed only by your tolerance. I beg your pardon for having wronged you all these years."

It was the elder man's turn to color and he did so hotly, but he affirmed loftily:

"Your impression has been correct. Schools up there are as out of place as in Interior Africa. Education serves only to puff up the lower classes, both the blacks and the whites, makes them try to ape their betters, unfits them for what they were made for—hewers of wood and carriers of water. I said improve them in the three particulars mentioned, make them less the animal, pound some sense into them, and then they might be reasoned with. That was what I said, sir."

Paul made no reply, but a faint smile twitched the corners of his mouth, noting which, his companion beat a sharp tattoo on the table, keeping his angry eyes on the young man's face and finally breaking out with:

"And your schools don't do it, nor your petty savings bank, and, least of all, your damned unions don't do it. They are just as block-headed, just as unreasonable, just as helpless, just as dependent as ever, and will be till the crack of doom. You'll have to agree with that."

"No, sir," responded the other firmly, "I cannot. But," diplomatically, "whatever my personal views on the matter, they are not worth considering and I beg that you will put them quite out of the question. I am here, not to present my own opinions, but to represent the several hundred men at the quarries and at the mill who have intrusted me with their interests."

"Ah, and the mill-hands also? You are quite heaped with honors."

Up came the steady gaze of the grave blue eyes and the answer sounded without a shade of annoyance:

"It is a responsibility not to be treated lightly, an honor the highest a community of men can confer upon any one man, and I appreciate it, I assure you. You deplore their helplessness and dependency, yet when they band together for strength, the only strength for the weak, that of union, you sweepingly condemn the means to the end, education and organization—the end which you yourself desire, their improvement! But again I beg you, Mr. Eldreth, to look upon me merely as a mouth-piece of these hundreds of men, your faithful employes for years, and to hear only their voices in mine."

The master of Eldhurst arose and began walking the length of the room. The other two followed him with anxious eyes.

"What do the quarrymen propose doing if your mission fails this afternoon?" he asked, stopping beside the table and looking down quizzically at the young man's fair, impassive face.

"They hope it will not fail."

"You have not answered me. If you fail, what have they up their sleeves?"

"It would certainly be unbecoming in me to be the bearer of threats to you, Mr. Eldreth, and believe me, I came charged with none. I am here to ask these simple questions: Will another reduction of wages be made? Can nothing be done to restore all to the pay-roll? Is there any hope that concessions on their side may serve to effect a compromise? Your answers to these, their respectful questions, I am to repeat within a few hours before the whole body of men."

"You call those respectful questions? Well, *I* call them damned impertinent! By what right do they come nosing into my affairs—*my personal affairs*, sir? How many men do I intend to work? And at what wages? Gads! aren't they *my* men? Don't *I* pay them, and with *my own money*? Why in blazes should I give time and submit to be catechized by you or any other man on my own particular business? Tell me that! But supposing I am tolerant enough to send answers, and supposing those answers be unfavorable, what will your precious union do?"

"I cannot say. That will depend——" He hesitated.

"Upon what you advise them," ended the other for him.

"To some extent," admitted the younger man.

Eldreth regarded him in reflective silence for some time.

"Then I shall be able to infer from the union's subsequent action what counsel you give them."

"I can scarcely be expected to assume full responsibility for the action of such a body of men," objected Paul, "Besides, I return to my work at Ward yet to-night. But I have promised Mr. Allan to do my utmost for a pacific adjustment of this matter, and I shall keep my word whatever——"

"Whatever answers I send?" sharply.

"Yes, sir."

Eldreth was growing more and more exasperated by the undisturbed calmness of the young man's manner.

"And the mill union—what will it do?"

"Its action, without doubt, will be in sympathy with the quarry union."

"In other words, if the one body declares a strike, the other will."

"If you will put it that way."

The elder man sat down and leaned far across the table toward his companion:

“ Now, there’s no use beating the devil round a stump, Menendez. The situation ’s this, in a nutshell: I pay certain men to do certain work. The product falls in price. I lay off some men. My privilege. I lose certain contracts. I cut wages. Again, my privilege. Now, the men at work virtually say to me: ‘ You dare to cut our wages again—contracts or no contracts—and we’ll walk out. Demand and supply be hanged! Employers’ rights to the devil! We are going to work at our old wages or not at all. We are the only skilled laborers in Colorado. You try bringing in non-union men for our places and we’ll see!’ Now that is the whole situation and you know it.” And he sat back in his chair challengingly.

“ No, no, Mr. Eldreth, that is *not* the situation,” cried Paul, rising in his earnestness, “ It is true that the men are in your employ at certain regulated wages agreed upon in the beginning. They have been laid off, put on again, and again laid off; their pay, small enough, God knows, has been reduced, while all the time their rent, unreduced, has gone on, their families have been maintained, and they are not unmindful of their indebtedness to you for bare shelter and food. It is as debtors that they approach you, through me. Men, hard-working, faithful, loyal men like Johnson and Peterson and Fredricks, have come to me in the few days I’ve been here

and implored me to do all in my power for the restoration of wages and the re-employment of the idle. They have reminded me of their burdensome obligations to you; they have begged me to remember their little children. I, in turn, beg you to remember them; for it is the helpless, those not responsible, who suffer most. I would go down on my knees to you, sir, if by so doing, I could the better plead their cause."

Eldreth looked a little amused, a little bored.

"Until within the past three months, you have represented me to these men. I should like to have heard how such an advocate of the laboring class upheld the cause of the grinding capitalist."

"Your curiosity might easily be gratified; you see Wagner and Max and Webb almost every day," asserted the young man; then he added boldly, "If it is ever granted me to employ workers even in numbers, no one shall act as mediator between my men and myself. I shall never be misrepresented, for I shall be my own direct representative. Nor shall mere wages be allowed to supplant all other ties."

His hearer caught a quick breath; but he recalled some argument in that article "The Right Divine to Govern Wrong," and remained silent. After a time he said:

"You don't mean to tell me that a strike has not been talked of if wages are cut. I know better."

"If there has been talk it is 'unofficial.' Besides, what other recourse have they? They are giving more than value received at the present scale."

"That is for me to judge, sir; not they nor you."

"They cannot live and at the same time reduce their indebtedness to you, and accept any lower wages."

"Then why don't they get out and go to work?"

"I have said why."

"Well, if they stay, they will stay at my terms, strictly. Tell them so. Will they then resort to the laboring man's cure-all, the strike? I am curious on that point."

"I do not know."

"What do you think?" impatiently.

"I fear they will, unless——"

"Unless I come to their terms?"

"Pardon me, I was going to say unless the cooler heads rule."

"I don't give a damn who rules. That reduction goes on Monday, if I have to shut down the whole business. Do you, does any one, imagine that I am going to be dictated to by a lot of numbskull Swedes and Irish? And if Webb and his gang walk out for no better reason than 'sympathy,' they will be a long time walking in again. That is all. The interview is closed."

But Paul drew a letter from his pocket, opened

the sheet and silently spread it upon the table before the other. It was the last card he had to play. Eldreth's eyes brightened as he gathered its contents.

"So we've got the Springs paving, after all? Well?" As the other did not move.

"And Schmidt tells me that your bid was accepted with Stanger & Franklin on their courthouse contract; and in a letter which I just received from Ben, he tells me you are solid with the McMurry Company for all their work on hand."

"Well?" repeated his companion, "and to how many of your friends the quarrymen have you confided this private information as to my streaks of good luck?"

"To none, sir, as you very well know," retorted Paul haughtily. Then, immediately softening his tone, he added, "I had ventured to hope that this unexpected good fortune might not only remove the supposed necessity for a further reduction of wages, but would necessitate the employment of the entire force."

Eldreth lifted his eyebrows, but before he could speak, the Rector, half rising on his elbow, interposed:

"Let me add my entreaties on behalf of the men, brother. What are a few hundred dollars to you, one way or the other, with such contracts as these and more in view? Save all the trouble, perhaps

bloodshed, with just a word. Let Paul tell them at the meeting to-night that at least those employed are to continue at the present scale. If not, he, I, no one, can be responsible for the results. I fear I am bedfast for a while."

His brother-in-law waited to light a cigar.

"It is no longer a question of dollars; no longer a matter of loss and gain. It has passed that, and resolves itself into just this: Who is running Eldhurst—Pierce Eldreth, or a handful of quarrymen?" Then turning, he bowed stiffly to Paul. "You had my answer some time ago, sir," he said.

When Paul was gone, Eldreth surprised his brother-in-law by lying back in his chair and laughing heartily.

"Talk about diplomats!" he exclaimed, "If that boy had been in Woodruff's stead at the court of Spain, the late unpleasantness might have been averted. Isn't an ambassador 'an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country'? This one would answer all the requirements. Such delicate tact, such subtle evasion, such clever doubling! By Jove, Edwin, he does you credit. I'd give half that Springs contract to hear his talk before those men to-night."

The Rector smiled, but said seriously: "It is no laughing matter, as you will find out, Pierce. Years of experience handling the interests of this place

would suffice to make a diplomat of most any one; and Ben put more than you will ever know on that lad's shoulders long before his past year as foreman. And you did him an injustice when you hinted that he did not justly represent you, his employer. I myself have more than once heard him doing battle for you most loyally; and in your absence he was certainly undisputed master. He allowed no interference even from Richard. You will admit this: that the past three months (or since his resignation) have seen more open dissatisfaction, more unrest, more changes among the men, than during the entire year under his management."

"It's all their infernal unions, I tell you."

"You forget that the unions were both organized some nine months ago, in the very midst of his foremanship. No, you are prejudiced against him."

"On the contrary, I rather like his superb audacity, his sweet persistence, his rash boldness. Think of the damned impudence of the fellow. What other man on this ranch, or off it, for that matter, would dare to talk to me as he has? That was a nice dig he gave me about an employer having a mediator between himself and his men. I'd like to see him master of Eldhurst for a while and directly represent himself from one end to the other."

"Well, you saw him do it for a year, or rather, you were gone so much (thanks to his management)

that you *didn't* see him do it! 'Who governs most, blusters least,' you know. But I know how vigilantly he kept in touch with all of the sub-foremen and their special lines, making each feel accountable to him. And he is loved and respected, for all he was so exacting. If he were in charge, I should no more fear a strike among the men, cut or no cut, than I should fear a flood from the ditches. But he leaves tonight, after the meeting."

"And the dickens of it is," mused the other, "that I've got to go to Denver this very evening—right away, in fact, and quite probably from there to Chicago for Lord only knows how long."

"Why don't you ask him to stay till the danger is well over?"

"Simply because it is an unwise precedent; because, as I told you once before, it never pays to give any one man the idea that your business can't run on without him. Like a compromise, it is dangerous to your own interests. Besides, Edwin, you talk like some frightened woman. Pray, will the earth turn upside-down if a few workmen on the hill lay down their tools?"

He smoked in silence for a time, then said defiantly, as he rose to go:

"And haven't I a son of my own? I'll have a talk with Richard before I start. I fancy he has enough Eldreth in him to swing things a couple of weeks, if he once makes up his mind to do it."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

SOME three or four hours between his evening meal and the meeting of Lodge Number One lay before Paul as he slowly descended the hill from his mother's cottage. They were the most beautiful hours of mountain regions, quiet, witching hours of soft breezes, of waning light, of sleepy bird-calls.

He turned, unconscious of his direction, into the road leading toward the Eldhurst stables. The doors were open, though there was no one about, the men being at supper. Bayonne, his favorite saddle horse while an employe of the ranch, whinnied eagerly to him from his stall; and Rob, the monster Bernard, fawned at his feet, whining piteously.

Paul turned back abruptly, and walked more slowly, his eyes on the ground. He was not thinking of the interview just closed, nor of the meeting yet to come, with his task of convincing men against their will. He stopped outside the garden fence near the summer-house, and leaning, lifted his eyes to the Peak, which was reluctantly parting from his sunset rubies and sapphires, and seemed looking ex-

pectantly toward the brightening moon for her promised silver.

Nor was he thinking of Nature's beauties and blessings outspread around him. Memories of his bitter-sweet boyhood were crowding upon his heavy heart; of days when *she* was always near. He was thinking how after his mother went to live with him at Ward, as she had now consented to do, he would have no occasion ever to come to Eldhurst. He was thinking how, there within a stone's throw of him at that moment, was the woman he loved, as indifferent to his comings and goings, as far distant from him and his heart-hunger as the Peak itself.

For one long year he had striven to put her out of his life. He had never set himself so determinedly to accomplish a result, and he had never failed so ignominiously. Everything had favored the accomplishment. A year is a long time. Boston is a great way from Colorado. There had been no word of communication between them. Yes, everything had favored the end sought, everything save his own heart. He was "cursed with constancy," he told himself.

How could he forget her? Every spot he visited in his duties, every path he rode, every foothill and cliff and fern-haunt, all were steeped in undying memories of her. The pines, the birds, the mountain brooks had but one voice—*hers*; the shadowed

pools were her eyes, the breeze her sigh, the sun her kiss. She had been gone twelve months, and not an hour of the time but she had been held against his heart. The mockery of it was well expressed in the refrain of one of her songs :

“ I spent a day away from you,  
And you were with me all the while ! ”

It was just a year today since Hanging Rock, and oh the pain and the rapture of the recollection ! But for that day he had been stronger. If he had never taken her in his arms, never tasted her lips, it might have been different ; but after that it was so hopeless. Most potent of all the memories was that of the look in her eyes just as he had caught her fainting form there on the hillside. That look ! many a wakeful night he had lain pondering it. It had been a confession, half-made, of what, if true, would make a mortal foreswear heaven itself ; it had been an appeal, the weakness of the girl-woman to the strength of the man. Surely, he could not be mistaken. Yet perhaps it was, after all, the mere creation of his own strong desire. Sometimes he was so triumphantly certain, again so pitiably uncertain.

In the broad glare of day, on the round of his prosaic duties, he called himself a fool, a self-deluded fool, and he had found no difficulty in convincing

himself of his folly. But at night, in the silence and the darkness of his own room, among the pillows her head had pressed, he must fight over and again a battle never lost, yet never quite won; must beat down his soul-sick longing through wretched, sleepless hours, lest it rise and master him to his utter undoing.

And now came his mother's assertion: She had called Marah by his name, clinging to her and begging not to be taken away, had yielded back his kisses—Oh, at the mere thought, his heart leaped into his throat and shook him bodily to its racing hammer-strokes. Dear heaven, if only he might know the truth!

Yet again, there was her freezing, penetrating, unseeing look, her deliberate, intentional slight, only the day before yesterday; and his heart fell like lead. After all, what else could he expect? There was but one ending for such madness. He had been a fool not to go away three years ago. How this love had burned through and through him, consuming all else. Right now, to go away from Eldhurst seemed a step he had no strength to take. He bowed his head to the fence-top and groaned as in physical pain.

As though in answer, there came subdued sobs from the summer-house and—what sounded like his own name! Before he knew what he was doing,

he had vaulted over the fence and was lifting the curtain of matted vines and roses from the entrance to the latticed bower.

It was She—there on the rustic bench, her face hidden by her arms on its back. She sat up and half turned, but still kept her face in her hands. She wore a house-dress of some pale rose-shade, a dress which force of circumstances afterward made her wedding-gown. It had been designed, however, primarily for comfort; was loosely belted just below the armpits, empire-fashion, and fell in shadowy folds that followed and defined the curves of her body. It was of shimmering silk, fine as spider-threads, that clung and rippled and gave off dozens of tones as it flowed downward and lay swirled about her feet, a drift of rosy snow. The sleeves terminated at the elbows in waves of soft white lace; the low cut of the neck was an unpardonable oversight of some absent-minded modiste. Over the half bare shoulders and glowing throat she had thrown a frothy lace scarf. Her coiled hair was fluffed out round her face, and a half-blown “Hermosa” rosebud clung just above the left temple. She looked half real but altogether dangerous in the subdued light. Somehow he could not see distinctly. A rosy mist seemed to rise from the drift of her skirts and send a blur across his vision. Perhaps he had overestimated his strength in coming.

He hesitated, his hand still lifting the mat of vines. She began dabbling at her eyes with a little lace handkerchief. She seemed to know who it was without looking. Her sobs were realistic and convincing.

"Lilys, what is it? What can I do?" He was the boy for the instant, ready as ever to serve her; the long absence, that slight of hers, unremembered.

"Go away! Leave me!" she sobbed, "Nobody cares, not a living soul. My summer-house is overgrown, my roses neglected; Bonita is gone, Royal is dead and Rob so grieved for her that he doesn't know me. Papa is away, Dixie's with Nina or Ruth all the time, and you've resigned. Nobody cares."

Old habits are strong. All his life he had been her companion, comforter, servitor. Her tears always moved him so. He approached a step or two without realizing it, entreating her:

"Don't cry; please don't. They all care, only they are thoughtless."

"Nobody cares," she reiterated, "you least of all. And after all the good, good times we've had, too. Have you forgotten our rides and scrambles among the hills and the dear old mountains? Have you forgotten the time my Tabbie was missing and you left your work two days to find her, and how angry Papa was when Ben told him, and how I stood in front of you and wouldn't let him punish

you? And have you forgotten the night I was lost and hurt my ankle and how you found me though everyone was out searching, and how you were so glad you cried? Have you forgotten?"

*Had he forgotten!* The happiest days of his life, watching over, amusing, working for her. But he kept silent, and he dared not lift his eyes.

"Paul," she began, rising and reaching for a honeysuckle-coral, "do you recollect what was said when you were brought here to this very summer-house, now more than ten years ago?"

"Yes, Lilys."

A pause.

"Well, what?"

"That here was some one for you to boss."

"Oh yes, that; and I've tried to do my duty in that line," smiling through her tears, "but something else, after Papa had gone. Do you recall what I said to you and to Helene?"

"How is it possible I should forget?"

Another pause, then petulantly:

"Well, and how am I to know you recollect?"

"You said you did not want some one to boss, but some one to—be kind to."

"I didn't say 'to be kind to,'—you know I didn't."

He glanced up almost angrily.

"Why do you bring these things up now? We

could not always remain children. We are woman and man now, and everything is changed."

"That is just it," and she began to sob again, "Eldhurst isn't the same place, and I can't bear it. Papa will be gone at least a week; Nina is eyes-deep in her wedding-clothes and her Chautauqua music; Dix is always at Howard's Saturday night, and you——"

"I must go to a meeting at the quarries," he announced, backing hastily toward the entrance, "and then away yet tonight."

"No, no. Why should you go?"

"Why should I stay?"

Her eyes were agleam with laughter now—safely, for he was not looking at her.

"Why have you stayed so long?"

"Because we owed your father, and there was no other way to pay."

"No, I mean now—here, in the summer-house?"

Slowly through the tan of his face a dull color throbbed. His eyes remained downcast. "Because—I—am—a—fool." He spoke with slow repression, but there was an undertone of warning in his very control.

Her eyes, humid with tenderness and bright with unquenchable mirth, were fastened upon his stern face.

"It is stupid to be wise all the time." (Scarcely

could she keep the glad laughter out of her voice.)

“Stay and amuse me.”

“I can do that without staying, if your memory is good.”

“Go, then,—go!” and she managed the little sob again, “I told you nobody cares—you least of all.” She really turned her back, as she said it; but if she had full-faced him and stretched both arms, she could not more surely have drawn him.

“God! how hard you make it for me,” he muttered, but moving blindly toward her all the time, “How like death you make it for me!”

It is surprising how much one can see with one’s back turned. She faced about at precisely the right moment, then, at sight of his face, put up both hands to stop him. But he seized her soft arms strongly.

“I love you—God help me! *I love you!*” Each word seemed torn from his heart by a force too strong for him. “Dear heaven! *how* I love you—with every breath I draw, with every thought, waking or sleeping, with every fibre of my being, to my soul’s depths. You shall hear me!” as she would have drawn away, “You may look as you looked at me the day you came; you may shudder from my touch as now, you may deny me as you will, but you shall stand still and hear me through, once for all. I, Paul Maitland, hireling, illegiti-

mate son of dishonor and crime, am telling you that I love you; that I cannot remember when I have not loved you; that I shall always love you. God Himself cannot tear you from my heart. You are all earth and heaven to me; my hope, ambition, desire, strength, lie centred in you; you are my whole life; my Hereafter. Yes, I know what I am and who you are, and all there is, and must ever be, between us; yet *I love you*. Do you hear me? Are you listening? There!" with a sigh that was almost a groan, as his head bowed forward, "at last it is spoken. Now show me my place, as only an Eldreth can."

If only he had looked into her radiant face! But he did not, even when she murmured: "If you wouldn't hold my wrists and hurt me so, I would rather show you *my* place."

He dropped her hands then, and with a sudden little movement she leaned and barely touched her forehead to his shoulder, then as suddenly sprang away, laughing her girlish, tantalizing laugh.

He did not move. His blood was leaping tumultuously, and through his brain his mother's words kept running: "Her head for your breast, her arms for your neck, her lips for your lips."

He stood looking unseeingly at her, his hands locked behind him, his eyes dark with pain. How could she jest, when to him it was the deepest

wound a man can receive? He turned away, but she drifted between him and the entrance, and stood, her eyes sparkling, irrepressible dimples deepening the corners of her mouth, which all but laughed.

An unaccustomed bitterness harshened his tone: "Why am I here? Why did you call my name? I have long acknowledged Miss Eldreth's beauty and power; not one of her father's employes, past or present, but do that. What further do you want of me? Could you not leave me alone in my misery?"

"Do you mean that you are sorry 'Miss Eldreth' came home? that you would rather never have seen me again? Do you mean that?"

"I don't know—I don't know what I mean," he cried, one hand over his eyes, "I only know that I must . . . . go." He reached for the vine curtain. "Forgive me, if you can," he added hoarsely.

But she was at the entrance before him, the lace scarf thrown off, her smiling, tearful face uplifted. He looked down at her—at the uncovered throat, the flushed cheeks, the dark hair with its drooping red bud—he wavered, and his hand clenched itself strongly upon the rose-stems, unheeding of the thorns. She seized the moment of his inadequacy; she leaned daringly near him, one soft, jeweled hand on his rough coat-sleeve.

"You shall have your wish—never to see my

face again; but now you shall listen to me, even as I was compelled to listen to you. It is you who have changed, not I. I am what I have always been; what I was—all that I was—one year ago to-day up at the—there under—” She broke off, and something of his bitterness crept into her tone. “But I dare say you do not recollect where we were one year ago this evening.”

“God!—girl! what do you mean?”

A soft flame played up into her eyes, a passionate cadence in her woman’s voice. “This: That you are to let the mine-management go; that you are to come back to Eldhurst. Then things can be just as they used to be. Come, for the sake of the old times; come, because I want you to, because I . . . . I want to be . . . . where you are, Paul.”

He took her by her half-bare shoulders and turned her to him and to the waning light, his grave eyes searching her now downcast face.

“You talk like a child,” he said sternly, “Even though I should return to Eldhurst, things could never be as they once were. Heaven knows I want to be where you are; but do you think I could come back under the old relations and abide them? Could I see you, be near you day by day, and not forget myself? What you ask is beyond human nature. No, there is but one way in this world that a man and a woman may be together; but one way, Lilys,

and that is Nature's way and Love's way and God's way."

"It . . . it must be a very good way, then," she stammered, but trembling away from him now.

He held her fast and drew her toward him, not knowing that he did so. "But you do not understand. I love you. I have told you, and you did not stop me, did not send me from you. You listened to me. You are a woman now; you know what a man's love means—all that it means. Surely you know, yet you—Things would not be as they used to be. It would not be a few daylight hours together, the mounting of butterflies, a gallop over the hills, with 'good-night' at close of day; but instead—Look up! Look at me!"

His long gaze burned its way to her inmost understanding. Her eyes fell again; she drew a quick, gasping breath and he could trace the rich heart-tide as it swept her throat and face.

"Now do you understand me?"

"Yes," she whispered, her head drooping, her fingers crushing the lace cobweb of her scarf.

"Does the Little Mistress mean that she would come to me in that sweet way—to me? No, do not speak,—think! think of that cursed tree up the Cañon; think of what your world would say; of your future, of everything; and for God's sake, do not say 'yes' except you mean it for life and for death." The intensity of his emotion quivered in

his voice, in the hands that were moving downward from her shoulders, on the lips nearing her own.

"I *have* thought for one long year, but I—" A more vivid crimson dyed her cheeks; she was half laughing, half crying. "Oh, I don't care anything about cottonwood trees, nor family trees. Paul, Paul!" flinging up both arms to him, "I don't care for anything, can't you see?—only to be with you—to . . . to belong to you——"

"*Lilys!!*" It was but a whisper, yet all the lover's rapture and triumph were in the one word, as he folded her to his breast with a passion that was none the less imperious because it had been so long controlled.

"You *love* me?" he breathed, incredulous still, bending over the fragrant hair, "*love—me?* But tell me. Let me hear you say it!" he pleaded.

She lifted a face all transfigured with her woman's full surrender; and their young lips met in a long kiss that made the giddy old earth sway beneath them and the walls of their rose-house whirl dizzily.

And the light of the June sky faded; the evening breeze stirred the leaves of their paradise, and a mother-bird in her nest high above them twittered contentedly. They did not speak. What need, when wooing winds and whispering leaves and mated birds spoke for them? when their throbbing hearts and clinging lips told all?

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## THE LOVERS.

THEY sat on the rustic bench within their tent of honeysuckle and wild gourd and the glowing splendor of the crimson Rambler; and the minutes sped, downy-footed.

Outwardly they were ill-sorted; he in his rough-cloth dress of the working businessman, with his strong browned hands and sunburned face; she in her costly silk with its rare lace, her white hands sparkling with rings which, though few, would have ransomed several kings.

Yet ever since his entrance she had been approvingly conscious of the nice details of his appearance. A year had lost to him nothing of his grace of manner; and she had noted with the pleasurable sense of proprietorship, the well-knit figure, the broad chest and shoulders, the restful strength in his every pose and movement. Nothing escaped her fastidious eyes—the irreproachable collar and tie, even the polish of the well-kept finger-nails.

He said little, nothing, in fact. Thrilled, stunned as he was, he seemed content to sit beside her in

a dazed, unreal happiness that found no expression save in the hand that delicately caressed her hair or her cheek.

But the girl reveled in her new-found bliss, exulted in possession. With childish abandon she leaned, curving her palms about his face, pressing her cheek to his. Or she would rise and draw his head against her warm breast and lift and smooth the heavy brown hair from his forehead. Then down beside him again, in the close circle of his arm, her eyes confessing all that failed her lips.

And joy bubbled from her heart and overflowed into speech. She questioned him and answered herself all in one breath. How long had he loved her? Not till he found she was going away? *She* had loved him even when she wanted to strike him there in the office; longer than that, even when he found her lost and they cried in one another's arms, boy and girl of a dozen years; and even as long ago as when he was brought to her there in the summer-house and *given* to her. Wasn't he hers? Of course! And had he ever loved Ruth? Had he ever kissed her, or any other girl? But certainly not; he wasn't like Dix. But why had he been so blind, so dull, so stupid? She reproached him for the year apart and the next instant laid all their unhappiness to her own horrid vanity and stubbornness. She told him of her year's struggle against

her pride; of how she had finally rejected DeLacy after her reckless decision to accept him; and lastly of the young Berlin violinist.

He questioned her gravely about this last one, rumors concerning whom had already drifted about as matters of the House always did. Then, with no comment, he put her gently from him, went to the high casement that opened west and leaned there, his eyes appealingly upon the Peak, as though it could answer the questions vexing his soul.

He was steadying himself, mentally as well as bodily, in a courageous endeavor to find his bearings, to readjust his future. The swimming tumult of his senses, the unaccustomed throb of his blood bewildered him. Realization of the last hour came slowly. He had confessed his long-concealed love—in spite of repeated, fortified resolutions, after all he had borne and resisted,—here in one unguarded moment, transported from all power of will and forbearance, he had told it. Most marvelous of all—she loved him! His breast was yet warm where she had rested. No, he was not dreaming in his room in the dark. It was daylight. He had only to turn. She was there.

They loved. What then? Had she thought? sought her bearings? readjusted her future? Marriage. And then? Ease, comfort, even luxuries, he could give her, with such a mine as was his

(or would be his soon) ; but—she would be disowned, cast adrift by kindred and society. She must descend to his social level, must find her world in his world, for “as the husband is, the wife is.” And all for him and his love!

This was that selfish love which he had derided so recently to his mother (wise little mother, who had foreseen this hour!). This was the misalliance he had said the very unborn should cry out against. The unborn! If Manuel Menendez had had no right to a beautiful woman, to children cursed before their birth, what of Manuel Menendez’s son? What name had he, Paul Maitland, what blood, with which to gift them? Would they not live to curse him, as he had cursed his father?

Yet, what could he say to her of all this? How make her understand? He had awakened in her woman’s soul a force beyond him to control, as it was beyond him to resist. He knew her nature, its headlong generosity. He knew she would leave home, friends, fortune, to share whatsoever was his, and call it happiness. He knew that she would bear for his sake all the pangs woman ever bore for man and call them blessed.

On his own side, did he not love her? Had he not held her, but now, in that long, impassioned embrace as a man holds, should hold, but one woman? Was she not his, by right of all laws, physical

and moral? Without her now, life would be hell again; to part, death itself.

And yet—her highest happiness, the welfare of the one beloved? Did it mean union with him? As though he had heard them but yesterday, Edwin Allan's words struck upon his sensitive heart, hard and uncompromising as hammer-strokes: "Doubtless she would fling away all for the man of her choice, like any other loving woman, but afterward she would wake to find life without them unbearable. . . . All her life she has had high social position, attention from the exclusive circle within the select circle. These are the very air she breathes. . . . Supposing she yielded and united with one her social inferior, it is my solemn belief that very soon she would wake to deplore, and live to regret. Your world could not be made her world. She would be out of her native element."

Was it true? *Was* it? Oh, God help him! It was a prayer. Though his hands were not clasped, though his lips were not moving, yet his whole being kneeled, implored. Slowly his head bowed to one arm on the high casement, and he leaned motionless, breathless.

"Paul!"

Her voice vibrated with love-born anguish; her hands, strong with love-born sympathy, drew down his arm. She held his hand against her breast and yearned up into his sad face.

"I know what you are thinking; I can feel it. You are saying to yourself all those terrible things you said on the way to the mills that day. I have said them all, over and over, during the year. I know them by heart—and I don't care, I don't care! I have thought of everything. A year ago tonight you held and kissed me, a mere girl then, and at once I seemed to see clearly some things that before had been mysteries. Now tonight you have held me to you again and kissed my mouth and I . . . I begin to understand many more things—things I did not know even an hour ago. You have brought me to life. You have made me love you, *love you*, till there is nothing else for me but to belong to you. If you leave me now, I swear to you I will do that 'desperate thing' I have always threatened, only it is a woman's threat this time and it will be a woman's deed, a something you can no more prevent than you could help staying here with me after you had once come."

He took her face between his firm hands and looked down into her eyes with deep, still tenderness.

"Leave you? Leave you? 'The Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me.' Yes, my Lilys, I have been thinking—many things; but they all lead back to this: Our love. That is enough now and hereafter. The past I can

not alter, but I may amend. A stain may be removed; a sin may be redeemed; an evil name be made honorable—and these shall be my purposes, now more than ever. For your future, you shall not know unhappiness if human love can ward it off; nor bear one pang that man can bear for woman. We have lost a whole year, or two, or three, perhaps, but we must live the deeper, love the more, to make good the joys that ‘of and for each other’s sake we might have had.’ I can not realize my great happiness—I, who have lived for a whole year on the memory of a look and of a kiss on lips I thought for others. No, I cannot realize it yet, but oh, I thank God!”

There was a deep thanksgiving in his voice that was almost solemn, and on his face such utter, pure content that made its radiance something to marvel at. He pointed through the high casement.

“When I was a very little boy, I used to kneel in the evening at our west window with my eyes on the Peak and repeat the prayers Mr. Allan had taught me. I had a childish belief that God dwelt on the summit of the Peak. Afterward when my life grew serious and hard from too heavy tasks and too little kindness, I placed heaven much farther off. I used to wonder where God kept Himself that I could not make Him hear. I am wiser tonight with all wisdom, wiser than the child, than

the youth. For I know that heaven is nearer than the Peak, even here in our hearts. He who gave us love and each other must be with us, blessing us, two already one."

She looked up into the serene and somber beauty of his eyes and again as of old, thrilled from the awe of contact with a nature larger, purer than her own. Ah, could she ever be worthy to work beside him, ever attain to his stature?

There under the lifting shadow of the Peak, he outlined their life as it would be, the work he longed to do, even in the prescribed field allowed him—the redress of grievances, the righting of wrongs, the easing of hard lives, the cultivation of waste places in the minds and hearts touched by their own. The mine at Ward was a rich one and would employ increasing numbers. This would be their field at first, a field they must bless even as God was blessing them.

The great hall clock up at the House struck the half after—what hour, neither could have told you. The young man started guiltily.

"Your first order to me this evening was to go away, to leave you. I have been a long time obeying it, Little Mistress."

She clasped his neck impetuously.

"Don't go to the stupid union, Paul; stay with me."

"Duty first," he said, but he laid his cheek down against one bare arm and did not move to go.

"Lilys," he began after another delicious silence, "if you've thought at all, where do you imagine I am going to put you?"

"In a tent, if you like. I shall follow you about all day anyway, as I've always done. And I can cook too," she informed him proudly, "Nina and I have both attended cooking school; and I've helped Lena with the dishes more than once."

He smiled one of his rare smiles, shaking his head and holding up to her view her own dainty hands in contradiction. Then:

"A tent—it will scarcely be so bad as that. But Ward is only a mining-camp, a very new one, with sorry comforts for such as you. It will not be Eldhurst; and you will miss society's favors, and your summer house-parties, and the prestige of your father's home—*how much* you will miss that I am powerless to give——"

"Well, are you sorry?"

"Sorry? With you looking at me like that?"

But he sighed, for many misgivings were weighing his heart. His mind ran forward to the future; hers seemed content to linger in the present.

"And have you thought," he asked by and by, "what an altogether enviable task lies before me in breaking this little matter to your father? Can you not picture the scene?"

The girl started away with a frightened look, her father's words sounding in her ears, "I would rather kill you with my own hand than suffer the disgrace of hearing your name linked with that of Marah Maitland's son."

"Write it to him while he is away," she pleaded earnestly.

The young man laughed outright. "Our sweethearts would make cowards of us all! Why, for which one of us do you fear? I give you my word I will not harm him."

"I hardly think he will do you any bodily harm either," and she laughed too, surveying her lover's stalwart proportions with proprietary pride. "But you know that you two never talked five minutes even about alfalfa or lumber without clashing."

"Oh, we like it!" he said grimly, thinking of the interview just closed.

"He will never consent."

He held her away at arm's length. "What then?"

She shrugged her shoulders in the adorable way she had. "Take me with you to Ward, right away."

"Don't look at me like that, else I might!"

Her gypsy face sparkled and dimpled. "'If he dares, who cares?'" she hummed.

"*He* cares, otherwise to dare were very easy, very

sweet. No, it is going to be hard enough for you hereabout with everything according to the high proprieties. Even so, there will be unkind comment which I can not prevent. The moment your father returns (not for a week he told me) I'll come back and rehearse that amicable little scene with him, then, whether or no, you will go with me. And now that meeting. It begins at eight."

He lifted the vine curtain, but she made no move to go. She was leaning near him, the picture of content. That "I'll come back" of his in no wise troubled her. He was not gone to Ward yet, nor was there any immediate danger of his going. What! leave her now? Absurd! impossible! Had she, Lilys Eldreth, ever hinted at coaxing any young man to tarry at Eldhurst? She usually felt tempted to coax them to go. Once Dix had bet her that she could not detain Harry Wentworth an hour beyond his absence-leave from his paper; had bet her a thoroughbred colt he had just received from Kentucky. She had won the colt, and with what ease. She had only to intimate that if Mr. Wentworth would remain over two days for her party she might grant him one round dance! He had had some unpleasantness with the *Tribune* afterward, but that was his business, not hers. And once DeLacy had lingered there a week, breaking several engagements, business and social, for the sake of a ride

with her up Boulder Cañon—on which ride, she had taken Pepito to carry her specimens!

And so . . . did she not know men? Weren't they all alike? Wouldn't the best of them do *anything* for a smile or the promise of a waltz or half an hour's *tête-à-tête*? As to "present company,"—and she smiled up at him meditatively—she had given him promises for a life-time, to say nothing of taking his many kisses. After he had yielded her her own way and stayed; after an hour or so, perhaps she might give him one kiss, just one little one, her first to any man. She would see.

"I suppose you must go to that meeting," she conceded, half petulantly, yielding the lesser that she might win the greater, "I'm sure I can stand it if you can. But after it is out——"

"It promises to be an all-night session, in the midst of which I shall have to leave to make my train, the last one to-night. I'm afraid I can't even drop off at the rectory to tell Mr. Allan the result of the meeting. I am under agreement to return to the Hopeful this, Saturday, night. It is imperative, as Bradley can not be there; is on his way to Denver by this time, and is depending upon me."

She changed tactics then. She lifted moist eyes and her lips began quivering like those of a very little child.

"You can not be in earnest, Paul. You are

not going away from me so soon and for so long? Why we have only just found one another, after a whole wretched year apart. And to be apart now——”

He would have taken her in his arms, but she eluded him and ended her speech at the further side of the summer-house.

“To be apart now would be like this, only you couldn’t even see me nor hear me then. No, no,” motioning him back, as he would have followed. “Wait; stand still and think what it would be like; think how you will miss me and want me—think!”

He had stopped where her command arrested him and stood looking dejected enough to satisfy the most exacting of inquisitors. It was too bad, but she must discipline him. She observed his suffering with exultation and let the moment one after another drag away in silence, with her back half turned. . . . Now she was sure he would not go, but she was not quite through with him.

By and by she reached one hand, as might a queen to a rebellious though penitent subject, but again halted him as he was about to seize the hand. She had not taken a step. He had come all the way. He must surrender, and on her terms.

Near as he was, he did not touch her, since it was her wish he should not; but she could feel his ardent eyes, and rich waves of color answered his

gaze. Still she would not look at him; her face drooped through what seemed an age to the lover, and she kept the distance between them.

"Don't punish me any longer," he pleaded humbly enough, "I'll be very good; and you shall say what 'good' means."

At that, she gave a little exultant cry, flung back her head—and she was close-folded in his arms, the uplifted crimson of her mouth clinging to his. A moment of blinding rapture followed . . .

"Only the meeting, Dearest—an hour—two hours," she breathed between her long kisses, "then—with me. I love you—*love you!*" She ended with her face still upraised, the soft, dangerous fire in her eyes again, her caressing fingers clasping his neck. Slowly she drew his head down, yet lower, yet closer till—his eyes closed, his senses swimming—he felt her tender young throat pulsing beneath his lips.

His arm tightened convulsively around her till she could scarcely breathe in his crushing embrace; and for one stifling instant, he did not move.

"You will stay, Paul." It was not a question.

"If only I might!" he whispered breathlessly, "*if only!* . . . . Don't, *don't*, DON'T!" He lifted his head, recalling his truant control. He passed a hand over his eyes with a short recovering laugh, putting her forcibly from him. "What do you think a man is made of, anyway?"

"Flesh and blood, of course," and the smiles and dimples attested her now certain triumph.

"Well then, I can't stand this, and you ought to know it, you witch! There. No, farther yet, and not so much as your finger-tips. So. Now let me try to think. Is it yesterday, or next week? Where am I? Is this earth or . . . . Ah, the meeting! I had forgotten such trifles as Duty. Why, I've a speech to make. What sort of one do you imagine it will be? None at all, if I stay here another minute. Really, solemnly, finally, Miss Eldreth, I *must* go."

"Yes," complacently, taking up her scarf from the back of the bench, "to Quarry Town."

"And to Ward."

"No, Paul—*no!*"

"But I promised." His tone was unmistakably final.

She looked at him despairingly, tears welling up in her eyes. Oh, he was not at all like other men; she had punished only herself.

"Don't cry, Lilys, I can't bear it. Don't make it any harder. It is taking all the strength I've got—can't you see?"

"You seem to have all the strength you need for—everything. But what is to become of me?" Her voice choked. "Only day before yesterday, because Dix teased me about you, Papa threatened

to shut me up with the St. Mary Sisters down in Denver. He threatened even worse if he ever heard our names coupled. Oh, I am so afraid. A week, ten days—something will surely happen. If you can not stay; if you must go, take me with you to-night. Paul, Paul! I want—to be—where you are.”

She was sobbing in earnest now, no acting; and holding her up “close and hard and strong,” her “Prince” let her cry till his royal strength of soul imparted something of itself through the steadfast arms around her, through the breast against which she lay. His eyes yearned down with a passion of tenderness upon her little shaken form. With infinite gentleness he stooped and laid his lips to her hair, his very silence soothing her, his man’s strong sympathy enfolding her. When she grew more calm, he said:

“Listen, my darling girl. You are troubled, else you’d think what you are asking. You would not have me steal you away by night during your father’s absence. We are to go—be very sure of that; without his consent, *yes*; without his knowledge, *no*. We can defy; but we can not deceive. And do I so fear Pierce Eldreth that I can not face him and ask him a man’s question? No, he shall consent; he shall be made to consent. Did Fate clear away from between you and me all the mis-

understanding and keep us both faithful so long; did God save you from DeLacy and bring you back loving and loyal, and all for naught? Think no more about St. Mary's. You are going, not to Denver, but to Ward; a bride, not a penitent. A fortnight, even less, of preparation for your comfort, then we will be together—I pledge you my life. Can not my own wait and trust me?"

He smiled down into her eyes with that firm, tender smile of proprietorship that women so love.

"Come, be your old-time fearless self, our brave Western girl. It is far harder for me than for you, thus to find you and then to lose you even for a week; yet it must be so. If I broke one promise, how could I ask you to trust another? Good night, my love. Very soon I am going to call you by a sweeter, a holier name. Then a certain little mining town, already of breathless altitude, will be even nearer heaven; then my life-long desire will be reality, for I shall have you, day after happy day, night after sweet night, your head for my breast—Lilys! Lilys!"

Another long dreamful pause which he fills lovingly; then his arm about her shoulders, they reluctantly ascend the hill toward the House, a tear-bright smile wooed back to her April face.

"Oh, if only Papa were here," she sighs, glancing up at the unlighted windows, "to order us away

from Eldhurst, you know, to drive me from home, as he would, *then* you'd take me, 'just as I am without one'—hat. Wouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid I should, pretty pink frock, tumbled hair and all. I'll take so much of you at any rate," and he untangles the rosebud from her hair, touches it to her lips and puts it securely away.

She draws from him smoothing hair and dress and laughing at the fancied picture. "And no gloves, and in these slippers. Wouldn't folks in Boulder have a right to stare? and wouldn't we cause a sensation up at Ward? For Marah isn't home, you said."

"We would certainly be the amazement of all beholders," he gravely agrees.

"And then you'd just have to miss your old union meeting, though all Eldhurst went to smash, and catch the eight-thirty train. Wouldn't it be lovely?"

"Even though . . ." he is helping with her hair, but with doubtful results, "even though Mr. Allan might decline to officiate yet to-night without the authority of a Boulder county license, and the clergy of both Boulder and Ward might be equally hard-hearted. Would *that* be lovely?"

Her answer, if answer she makes, is lost in the folds of his coat where she hides her face. He puts his own generous, if wrong, construction on her silence. She has not thought. After all, she is

only a girl. Well, it is his to think for both now.

"I shall write you every day and dream of you every hour. So soon as I am free, I will come and never leave you again, please heaven. For the very moment your father says 'Yes' (or 'No' rather) you are to be made mine, whether that moment be noontime or midnight. Until then," lifting her face, "you will long for me just a little, Sweetheart?"

"For you—and for the moment. Oh, I love you!" she whispers with a long, quivering sigh.

"God keep you, my Darling." There is a falter in his strong voice. He holds her in a lingering last embrace, drinking from her lips as a man drinks from an oasis spring when he must turn and face desert wanderings again. Then he rapidly descends the hill.

And both are happily ignorant of what the week is to bring.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE TRUTH BY ACCIDENT.

PAUL walked the deserted platform on the Colorado and Northwestern station in Boulder awaiting the belated train for Ward. It was long past midnight. He walked slowly back and forth in the wavering circle of an arc light, his head slightly inclined, a smile on his lips and in his eye, as he looked down at the withered memento in his hand.

There was cause for the smile. After he had closed the gate of his paradise, supposedly for a long fortnight, it had opened to him briefly once again. He had stopped at the rectory, late as it was, to tell Mr. Allan the action of the union, and when he entered the sick-room, there was Lilys, demure of manner, but with eyes eloquent with mischief. Her innocent uncle, untaught in the ways of women, gravely explained her presence there at such an hour, by expatiating upon her unselfish devotion to him and upon her solicitude about the threatening quarry troubles. And she had unblushingly corroborated his statement.

But her lover had succeeded in bringing blushes

to the cheeks of the charming prevaricator by a method all his own, and had ended by telling the astonished rector the whole truth in the straightforward way characteristic of him. And if they never received the blessing of the father, they already had what was more precious, that of the uncle.

Then: She had gone to the gate with him; and he had returned to the porch with her, only to find her at the gate before he had his horse untied—something important she had forgotten to tell him, yet which she could not, for the life of her, recall at once upon joining him again; so he must wait while she tried to recall it. He had started as many as . . . . ? . . . . separate and distinct times, and each time it was harder than the time before. At last he had managed to mount his horse, hopeful that the animal might be able to do the rest. It had been able, but it would be some time before the poor brute could again go into active service. And after all the haste, that confounded train was behind time, time enough for at least another . . . .

The young man's meditations were broken into by the arrival of a carriage at the side of the platform—the Eldhurst carriage. He watched William swing the sorrels round in his familiar, dextrous way, dismount from the seat and open the door for his young master. That worthy walked straight

to the telegraph office and came as straight back, swearing in true Eldreth style over the lateness of the train from Denver. He consulted his watch, dismissed the carriage and he too began walking the platform.

“Why, hello, Paul.”

“Hello, Dick.”

The two had come face to face under the big arc light; that “Hermosa” hidden away barely in time.

“This damned train’s always late,” fumed Richard.

“Seems so,” assented the other, slipping the strap of his small grip from his shoulder and stopping to light a cigar.

His companion also proceeded to light a cigarette, neither offering the other the contents of his cigar-case. Richard sat down on the edge of a trunk that awaited the up train; Paul stood leaning against a telegraph pole, his valise at his feet. They were practically alone. They smoked in silence for some minutes, then Richard said:

“You’re just from that meeting, I take it. The governor detailed me the situation. I suppose they’ll make me all the trouble possible?”

“I think not. Only regular business was transacted, besides consideration of wage-reduction next week.”

"Will work go on Monday?"

"Yes."

"And the rest of it?"

"Will depend . . . ."

"On how they're handled? Well, it will not be with gloves nor tongs. That whole gang up there has been spoiled. Ingham and the Parson and the rest of you have made them believe they are doing Eldhurst a great favor by condescending to develop her quarries. And I've no doubt by this time they are persuaded that the only difference between the village and the House is the elevation of their respective hills. Well, the present administration may show them a trick or two."

Paul made no comment. He did not always give advice when requested, and in this case, the request was lacking.

Through the silence that followed his thoughts strayed far from union meetings and threatened strikes. He smoked on, regarding the dark engaging face of his companion, with new interest. The same shadowy eyes with thick, silken lashes, the same passionate, perfect mouth. Then too, the same impatience of responsibility, the same reckless disregard of consequences, the same disposition to dance too near irruptive craters. . . . Yes, the resemblance was strong, he had to acknowledge, between the woman he loved and this man whom he

did not love. . . . After all, he was her brother ; in her father's absence, the head of her house ; and as such, possibly an intimation was due him of the very unexpected which was to happen so soon. Anyway, it seemed the decent thing to do. So, for once, he spoke on impulse.

" I'm glad we met, Dick, for there is something I want to tell you. The tidings will be most unwelcome to you, the situation unpleasant. You, I think, will understand without detailing. For some time I have known that you were acquainted with the true state of affairs, not blind as all the others have been. Of course the relationship of brothers will be repugnant to us both. Since we were boys, there has been no love lost between us. So, when I claim my own (so soon as I come down again) you will resent it, naturally, since my great gain is your loss. Our kinship, however, yours and mine, will be in name only, and fortunately there is no law compelling us to live in the same county."

He paused, meeting Richard's astonished stare with a half-smile and continuing :

" Mother Marah is kind enough to assume the responsibility for my sudden good fortune. I fancied from something she said that it pleased her to believe the credit wholly hers ; and of course I indulged her, since, from Eden down, women have been the responsibility-takers." He laughed softly,

his mind running back to his interview with his mother the day Lilys arrived from Boston, and he ended: "At any rate, but for certain revelations she made to me, I'm afraid I should never have gathered the necessary courage."

Richard continued to stare up at him quite speechless. To his mind, alert and not wholly innocent, the words he had heard were freighted with an import all undreamed by the speaker. "Unwelcome tidings," "unpleasant situation," "true state of affairs," "relationship of brothers," "when I claim my own," "my gain your loss,"—to Richard's mind, all these could mean but one thing. And if other proof were wanting, Marah was "responsible for the sudden good fortune," through "certain revelations" she had made. Aye, certain revelations she had sworn to him, Richard, never to make, though she died for them. Yet she had betrayed them; that was evident. The secret was out,—and to Paul, of all men. Oh, curse a woman anyway—always at the bottom of a man's trouble!

"Well," he growled out at last, tugging sullenly at a strap of the trunk on which he sat, "what are you going to do about it?"

"*Do?*" laughed the other, little dreaming the construction that had been placed upon his words. "Is there any question in your mind? What would you do?"

"What you will, I suppose—fight it through. But it won't be as easy as it looks. I for one will do my little best against it, that I promise you. Why shouldn't I? And then there's the governor. Does he know?"

"Assuredly not. Why, I myself have known it only since dinner. I did take half a minute to tell Mr. Allan; but he is the only one."

"Humph! And I suppose he is delighted, charmed."

"He seemed so; but being in that state myself, allowance will have to be made for my impressions. The whole thing is still so new to me that I'm not at all sure of my own name."

"Well, being sure of it yourself and making others sure of it you'll find, are two distinct propositions. It will be a pretty fight, with the burden of proof all on you."

His companion gave him a quick, puzzled glance. "I presume I'm dense, but I don't follow you."

"You don't think I am one to give up till the last ditch on a transaction of this sort. I have some influence with my father and with her too. Who wants half a fortune when there's a fighting chance for the whole?"

Paul threw away his cigar and came a step nearer. "We would do well to get together, Eldreth," he smiled, "You are talking of one matter, I of another, it appears."

"I wish to the Lord we were! Personally, I prefer some other topic or no topic at all. You surely don't flatter yourself that I relish the situation, appealing though it be, even to my sense of humor. Oh, it's too cursed ridiculous! Borders on the yellow, too, don't you think? *I* the bastard of your foster mother; *you* the legitimate of my step-mother! Unique, isn't it? Harry Wentworth would give his ears for such 'copy.' "

Paul fell back the step he had taken and stood staring, in his turn, as though suddenly bereft of his senses. For one instant his heart almost ceased. Then his swift mind reviewed the dialogue by this new and blinding light. He saw the whole from Richard's standpoint; seized upon the truth, made his by accident, and fitted it to its exact place. And then . . . He clung to the telegraph pole for support, great drops forcing themselves upon his pale forehead.

"Merciful God!" he whispered, "if I am—what you say—what of her—*her—my promised wife?*"

And then it was that Richard Eldreth could have bitten out his blundering tongue; for he knew that it had been the first to intimate to the man before him his true position!

Swinging round on the trunk with his back to the agonized suppliant, he did more rapid thinking in the minute that followed than ever before in all

indolent, care-free life. Two ways were open to him, and he ran each down to its logical conclusion. Marah—she had betrayed nothing. It all rested with her, and he could influence her, sway her to his wishes, absolutely. Let Paul rest in the knowledge of the half truth, as now . . . and the Eldreth fortune would be divided by three. That was one way. But Paul had said “my promised wife.” Tell him the whole truth, and what then? He, Richard, could influence his father, for he had long known that he was the favorite child. Once that marriage were consummated (misalliance, it would be in Pierce Eldreth’s eyes, viewed in what light soever) and there would follow repudiation, disinheritance;—and the Eldreth fortune divided by ONE. His choice was made. He turned about, for the grasp on his arm was painful, the hoarse voice more than imploring:

“For her sake, man, if you know, *who* is she—*what* is she? In God’s name, tell me!”

“Oh, don’t be a fool,” he remonstrated, twisting from the grasp, “The Honorable Pierce is not responsible for all of us. There are others, or were. Give the Mexican some credit, anyway for the tropical temper and the torrid emotions and the good looks of his race. The girl is no blood relation of yours, at any rate, and you might have had her on a man’s terms any hour the past year or longer.

That'll be the only way, let me tell you, for if Puritan and peon blood are to mix for a new breed, it'll never be with parental consent nor priestly sanction. But you won't have to plead on bended knees. If you don't know your name now, she never has known hers—in both senses. She's been over heels in love with you ever since you beat me up for trying to slap some sense into her. And she isn't a beauty at all, and she hasn't trailed you round, all places and all hours? Oh, you infernal fool—the chances you've let slip! The lady and the hired man! Clever, you are! Why,—ha, ha! Marah Maitland's the only bright one at Eldhurst. I wonder the rest of you have kept out of the home for simple-minded,—you, the honorable sire, the pious uncle and all concerned.”

But Paul had heard nothing after the first two or three sentences, and once comprehending their import, he had staggered forward and collapsed upon the trunk beside his companion, and now sat wiping his brow and breathing heavily.

The faint whistle of a train sounded from the south.

“So it seems you were right; that we were talking of wholly different matters. And you can't deplore our 'getting together' any more than I do. Now, if you will pardon a *brother's* presumption, I will again put my vital question: What are you going to do about it?”

The man beside him made no reply. He arose and walked to the extreme end of the platform, several yards distant, and stood staring into the night—and into the future. Six hours ago and he had been compelled to reshape his entire future. Was it all to be done again? Two ways lay open to him also. He too thought rapidly with characteristic power of adjustment, power to accept this, reject that, to estimate and weigh truths for their right value. Swiftly he followed those two separate lines to their logical ends.

The man on the trunk sat his eyes riveted on the silhouette of that motionless figure; sat thinking his own thoughts, and they too were characteristic.

The rumble of the incoming train sounded more distinct; the platform began to tremble with transmitted vibrations. Trucks clattered, lanterns glimmered and sleepy depot-employés appeared.

Paul came back with quick firm step. His brow was clear. His choice was also made. He spoke rapidly.

“Can I rely upon you to keep this secret?”

“Well, rather!” drawled the other, “It isn’t news I’d enjoy peddling about. Till you come down, of course you mean?”

“No; always.”

“WHAT!”

“It will depend upon you.”

The other sprang to his feet, thrusting out an eager palm.

“Will you give me your hand on that?”

Paul turned, picked up his grip and slipped the strap up over his shoulder, for the train had come to a standstill.

“I would,” he said coldly, “except that *gentlemen* do not so seal compacts with men of my class. I am a Menendez, remember. Still, my spoken word is fairly reliable. Good night.”

With hands plunged deep in his pockets and feet wide apart, Richard Eldreth stood staring after him as he swung up and disappeared in the smoker of the now moving train.

“Well—I’ll be—damned!” he muttered.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE CONSPIRATORS.

THE reduction in wages at the quarries went into effect on Monday according to program; but the counsel of the cooler heads prevailed, and Paul's talk on Saturday night and his personal influence among the men before he left sufficed to send them to work Monday morning. Yet there were black looks and talking in knots and much slackness in the work, though the burly Schmidt stood over them in person like a veritable slave-driver.

It was Antonio Garia and Marah who precipitated the strike after all. In this wise: Antonio came down from the mill late Saturday night to learn the action of the quarries union, that he might report it to Lodge Number Two. Like the others, he succumbed to Paul's persuasion, and promised surely to return to the camp after he had spent the next day with Ruth.

But when Paul had gone and Antonio after the meeting found Ruth at home with the Schmidts; when he learned that Richard Eldreth was to manage affairs in his father's absence and that he had spent the early part of Saturday evening at the

Schmidts' instead of at Howard's, Antonio straightway forgot his promises to Paul, bribed Pepito, his brother, to carry the report to the mill Sunday morning and sent a letter to Webb stating that while the strike had not yet been declared it would certainly be in a few days, and that he thought it scarcely worth while for him, Antonio, to return to work.

This done, Antonio went straight to Schmidt's, told Ruth to pack her trunk and come with him to Marah's where he had arranged for her to remain till Paul took his mother away. He said nothing about young Eldreth; merely told her there was going to be trouble in Quarry Town, and he would rather she would not be there.

Ruth objected and coaxed and cried, but in the end she yielded, for she feared this black-eyed, fiery-hearted lover of hers. But she revenged herself by sending a note over to the House by little Fritz Schmidt explaining to Richard that she was going against her wishes; that she could not meet him till Antonio returned to the mill; and whatever he did not to try to see her at Marah's, with whom Antonio had some sort of understanding.

When Antonio was leaving, after seeing Ruth ensconsed in the Menendez cottage, Marah followed him into the porch and looking into his eyes, questioned:

“Are you men up at Quarry Town going to allow yourselves to be soft-soaped by the boy Paul into coming to Pierce Eldreth’s terms? Are you slaves with no rights?”

“But I promised Paul,” hesitated Garia.

“Oh, promised Paul!” mimicked Marah.

“What can I do alone?”

“Haven’t you a tongue in your head? Doesn’t it generally get what you want? Or is that true only among your women friends?” sneered his companion, “His tongue is all that Paul used, but he seems to have the whole lot of you fairly hypnotized. Eldreth got the Stanger & Franklin court-house contract; Schmidt told me so himself, and there are several others as good in view. Why this reduction? Why aren’t all the men at work? What good are unions, anyway? Why are you, one of their best quarrymen, kept up in the woods, instead of being, by this time, a crew-foreman along with Gustav? When you can answer these questions, you may talk to me about some petty promises better broken than kept.” And she turned back into the house.

Antonio’s conscience protested feebly as he descended the hill. He knew how much he owed to Paul in Ruth’s case; he’d feel like a sneak to try to undo his good work at Quarry Town, and he away too. He hated the Boss, it was true, and as for the Boss’s son——

A small boy came running up the hill. Antonio had seen him part from a certain well-dressed figure in the House yard and come running down the opposite hill past the summer-house, and——

“Where are you going?” he called suspiciously.

The boy made a wide detour, fear in his eyes; but he stumbled and the man pounced cat-like upon him and shook him.

“To . . . to see Ruth,” whimpered the child.

“From whom? Tell the truth, you son of a Dutchman, or I’ll put holes through you.”

“From him,” nodding toward the House where the well-dressed figure could be seen slowly pacing the veranda.

“And you’ve got a letter,” hurling him to the ground and jerking him up again, “Give it up!”

But only a bright silver dollar rolled from the boy’s pocket.

“No, I haf not, ach mein Gott, I haf not!” His consternation was too genuine to be doubted. He would have given up his ears to that terrible man.

“What were you to see her for? What were you to say? Out with it—every word,” insisted his captor, one hand on his revolver.

“He said,” gulped the frightened child, greedily concealing his ill-gotten silver, “he dit say—tell—her all right—he vud see her.”

“The devil he did!” muttered Antonio, “You

dare to tell her one word of it and I'll kill you, that's all. Come with me!"

As he marched his little prisoner before him to the quarries, his wrath fermented more and more. Dick Eldreth sending word to *his* Ruth "All right, he'd see her." *Dios nos libre!* What next? And *what* was "allright"? He would see her, and he, Antonio Garia, there at Eldhurst. See her? *Cuerpo de Dios!* he'd see hell first! Oh yes, it would be "all right," sure. That *did* settle it. Marah would see if he had a tongue in his head, and if love-making was all it was good for!

He went direct to Anderson's where Gustav Swensson sat in gloomy silence at the bedside of his sick wife; where Hilma's father, one of the men laid off, sat brooding over his double wrong. From them he went among the other idle men, and Anderson went with him. Then the two went after hours, among those who were working at the cut wages, and by ridicule, goading and misrepresentation, subtly undid Paul's work.

And Marah, who was nursing Hilma, dropped potent words on her journeys to and fro, and thus the leaven worked.

By Tuesday night another meeting was called. Antonio addressed it with fiery eloquence, and Anderson, who was greatly respected, spoke a few short, telling sentences in the young orator's support.

The elder Johnson, one of the "cooler heads," made a blunt, sturdy speech opposing them, and he was followed by Peterson, who stumblyingly recapitulated the dire results of a strike, as Paul had detailed them, and reminded the men of their promises to their old-time foreman.

But before Peterson had fairly finished, Antonio was on his feet. He talked with the fluency of the natural orator, with the headlong passion of his stormy race. He reviewed the wrongs of the quarrymen, beginning far back; he called up the occasion of the former cut in wages, and the unexecuted threats of a strike made at that time. He asked the men whose names had been stricken from the payroll how fast they were reducing their debt to their master—with scornful emphasis on the last word. He asked them how they liked eating Eldhurst bread, living in Eldhurst houses, and handling Eldhurst scrip? He dealt out the information that *half* the force at *half* pay was expected to fill all the Stanger and Franklin contracts for the season, the Springs paving and heaven only knew how many others, while that damned aristocrat pocketed the profits and he and his white-handed son laughed in their sleeves at the numbskull Swedes.

Johnson tried to make himself heard in the hub-hub that followed Garia's speech, but failing, left the hall followed by his son, Fredericks, Peterson

and a few others, leaving the meeting in the hands of the extremists.

A strike was at once declared and the adjournment made in confusion.

Wednesday morning the quarries were silent as a graveyard. Not a hammer was lifted.

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“What are you going to do?” asked Richard Eldreth when, called down to the office hours before his usual rising time, he faced Schmidt, across the paper-piled desk.

“Vhot pe you goin’ to do? You is Poss here now,” returned the quarry-foreman eyeing the young man askance. “I know vhot I vud to, py Gott!”

Richard shuffled a pile of unopened mail uneasily. This was a new and welcome experience to him.

“I’ll telegraph my father at the Brown to send us up some new men from Denver. If he’s already started east, we’ll get some from Boulder and hereabout. Go to town with William when he takes the telegram; wait for and open the reply, and while you’re waiting, look around for non-union men. I’ll see you when you get back, Schmidt. Just now I’m so infernal sleepy I don’t know straight up. Why, it isn’t daylight and I just got in from town, not two hours ago. Here’s your telegram. I’m going back to bed. Even if the new force comes from Denver,

they should be here to-night, and at work by to-morrow."

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The telegram did not find its recipient in Denver. The Brown Palace replied that Mr. Eldreth had left for Chicago on Tuesday evening, with instruction for mail to follow for ten days, care the Auditorium Annex.

So Richard took a brace of "Scotch" without the soda, added what he could to Schmidt's motley collection of new men, mostly Italians recently from Eldora and other near mining camps, and on Thursday work in the quarries was resumed.

Not hearing from Webb by Pepito, and fearful lest Lodge Number Two might weaken, Antonio tore himself away from Ruth and broke all records going to the lumber-camp. This was Thursday night.

Ruth took prompt advantage of her betrothed's absence to send a message to the House with information of that absence. She believed that she risked nothing by so doing. Her father was in Denver, Paul at the mine, Miss Howard was attending the Chautauqua which holds each summer just outside Boulder, and Antonio could not possibly reach Eldhurst till after ten that evening. So the coast was clear. Even Pepito was most of the time at the rectory.

Now it chanced that Richard had quarreled with

his fiancée on the Saturday before. Lilys being unwilling to leave her Uncle's bedside, young Nolan had been summoned from Denver to make tenor substitutes for the soprano parts in the duets assigned Misses Eldreth and Howard on the Chautauqua programs. He had needed much practice, and Miss Howard's time had been given wholly to him, under her father's exacting tutorage; and in Richard's opinion this "monopoly" had been "outrageous."

Saturday afternoon he had sulked at the House rather than hear her even "singing love to another fellow;" the early part of Saturday evening he had passed with Ruth at the Schmidts; the night he had spent in Boulder with boon companions from Denver. The next day he had absented himself from services, both morning and evening, because "that prig Nolan" would be in the choir; and Monday morning he had viewed from the House the departure of the Howards and their guest for the Chautauqua encampment, whence they would not return till the following Sunday morning.

So it was that half through spite, half through *ennui* and wholly through recklessness, Richard decided to respond in person to Ruth's laborious, misspelled note. Life was threatening again to become stale, flat and unprofitable, and a bit of pirouetting on the edge of an irruptive crater might prove blood-stirring.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE WOMAN WHO DELIBERATES.

RUTH "felt" that Richard would come; so after she had helped Marah with the supper dishes, she retired to Paul's room, which she occupied during his absence, to dress for her "gentleman caller."

Paul had all but faded from her impressionable mind. She was not one to cherish a hopeless attachment, and hopeless it certainly was in face of his brotherly attitude toward her. She had exhausted her wiles on him; had written him at Ward and waylaid him at Eldhurst—in vain. But anyway, she had forever "fixed things" between him and the Boss's daughter, and with that "fixing" she must rest content.

So, for months, she had dreamed of the handsome wicked eyes of Richard Eldreth, in fact, ever since he had kissed her there at Marah's the day of their "understanding," if not engagement. In a secret compartment of her little trunk she had concealed a picture of him cut from one of the Denver society papers, and nightly she gazed at it, building castles which enlarged with her gazing.

But a merciful Providence seemed guarding An-

tonio's foolish young sweetheart, for, though her father was at Ward and her betrothed at the lumber-camp, opportunities for meeting Eldreth during the past few months had been rare. He had been gone during the winter and all spring the House had been full of men. There had been "stag doings," extended shooting tramps in the hills and prolonged visits to Denver, and Miss Howard had seemed to require the remainder of the young man's time. So all that had passed between him and his "Quarry Town girl," were a hurried whisper in the church aisle before the members of the choir came down from the gallery, and a snatched moment or two at the back gate.

With the transfer of her sentiment from Paul to Richard, her resentment naturally changed from Miss Eldreth to Miss Howard. One of Ruth Bradley's type seldom forgives the superiority she can not deny, and Miss Howard's kindness to Ruth, had, in that aspiring young lady's opinion, always been alloyed with condescension. There had been some little friction just lately. Miss Howard, as head of the mission school in Paul's absence, had found it necessary to put a stop to a foolish flirtation Ruth was carrying on with one of the older boys, and the interference was resented. And only a night or two after that, as Nina and Ruth were leaving the schoolhouse, they had met Richard, who

without a moment's hesitation gave his arm to the former, with only a nod and a word to the other.

These matters rankled; and Ruth devised a scheme to serve herself and her revenge at the same time. For she had made up her mind that she was worthy a better match than a mill-hand. Had not her cousin Maude married a gentleman? And was not Michael Bradley now a well-to-do mining man? So his daughter's ambitions had mounted till she pictured herself mistress of her self-built castle, which castle grew more and more to resemble the House on the hill.

But about her scheme: The great annual Festival of Mountain and Plain in Denver would be held a month earlier than usual this year, on account of some big national convention, and already the maids of honor, one young woman, supposedly the prettiest and most popular, from each county, were being appointed to attend the queen of carnival, usually a Denver girl. Ruth had induced her father to take up the matter of her appointment from their county; and armed with her photograph, his friends' "pulls" and his own Irish eloquence, he had descended upon the appointing committee on his daughter's behalf. Of his success, he had assured her, there was little doubt. This very week he was in Denver, buying new machinery for the Hopeful, and incidentally laboring with the committee.

Already she had planned her dress, a bright red silk with big appliques of ecru all over it, rather low neck and a very long train, her first. She had lost sleep, picturing herself in the decorated carriages with the other maids in the illuminated procession attended by the gaily-attired outriders, Slaves of the Silver Serpents, a most exclusive society to which she knew the Boss's son belonged. The Slaves' annual ball at the Brown Palace was a social event; Ruth was a pretty dancer, a pretty girl, her father a rich man—and so her ambition ran riot.

This evening as she dressed for her high-born lover, the excitement of castle-building gave added color to her always blooming cheeks and a sparkle to her eye; though there was animation enough in the thought of her enviable position—one lover scarcely out of sight before the prompt appearance of his rival.

Mr. Richard had said she was the prettiest girl in Eldhurst, and her glass confirmed his judgment. She had selected for this evening a pink lawn dress with a vivid purple flower in it, had bound her waist and her hair with lavender ribbons. Then with trembling fingers she tucked in the high neck, pinning it to form a low V in front, which opening she edged with a piece of wide-meshed yellow lace, and blushing surveyed the effect. Why shouldn't she expose her throat? Didn't even scrupulous Miss

Howard bare her shoulders, and as for Lilys Eldreth, her evening dresses were sights to behold—just no waist at all.

While she was delightedly viewing this careful toilet in the glass, bowing and smiling to it, her caller arrived. She could hear him talking with Marah in the next room.

She paused in the act of fastening a bid red dahlia in her hair. What was that he was saying? "Maid of honor from Boulder county"? Ah, then he knew. But, listen:

"I doubt if she will accept. It was wholly unsolicited, though of course no one will believe but the governor pulled his political, and I, my social strings. Anyway, after she'd given me the letter from the committee she laid it upon the piano and went on singing her Chautauqua songs as though such appointments were every-day affairs and not the ambition of every girl in Colorado, pretty or unpretty."

So Nina Howard was to be maid of honor from Boulder! Tears of disappointment and anger rose to the eyes of the listening girl. Unsolicited, indeed! Ruth knew better. It was a piece of spite work on Miss Howard's part, just because she knew that Richard cared most for her, Ruth. The lines about her mouth hardened, and a look of determination came into her eyes. She dusted more

starch over the traces of her tears, poured half a vial of Jockey Club over the front of her dress, tucked a pale blue silk handkerchief into her lavender belt and with one last approving look at the reflection, entered the sitting-room.

If she had dressed to impress her guest, she succeeded. Well-bred as he was, he winced almost perceptibly at first sight of her prismatic splendor. With him, as has been said, a fastidious taste, both natural and cultivated, all but supplanted conscience. In other words, the æsthetic sense seemed the highest within him, often preventing a fall where the moral sense would have failed him. Passionate as he was, he could yet overlook his fiancée's natural coldness because of the keen, sensuous pleasure afforded him by those "symphonies of subdued color," her toilets.

So, upon Ruth's entrance, it required his lifetime training to render him politely unconscious of her astonishing color-scheme: and his mother watched him, amusement touching her usually unsmiling lips.

But some girls are pretty in spite of dress. This one had youth and health and bloom, a sumptuous figure, a pair of full fresh lips and (tonight) an air of coquetry very becoming to her. Lastly, she was in love with him, which covered a multitude of faults. There was a marked change in her. She

was all animation. She laughed immoderately and talked rapidly and, in spite of Marah's presence, hovered near him, showing him this and that, coming and going, leaning an instant against his shoulder, touching his hand, his knee, accidentally of course, and never seeming to see the fire thus kindled in the dark eyes that burned so intently upon her.

And again Marah observed without seeming to see. She had witnessed these same wiles practiced on Paul. At the recollection of the look in his eyes, her smile faded. Aye, surely, blood will tell!

For some reason the elder woman did not for one moment leave the two alone. Richard inwardly chafed; but he was more than half in awe of this daring little woman who acknowledged her shame that she might call him son. It would never do to antagonize her; she knew too blanked much.

But when he was leaving, Ruth being near the outer door, he crossed rapidly to where Marah stood and put his arms around her, drawing her toward him and smiling down at her in the winning way he had with women, old or young.

"Good night, *Mother*," he whispered, very softly, his mouth close to her ear. Then he kissed her and said aloud, laughingly, "I can kiss you before Ruth, Senora, but how ever am I to manage it with Ruth before you? There!" kissing her again, "isn't

that worth your standing right here for three minutes while she tells me good-night in the porch?"

Worth it? It was worth Ruth's soul! She lifted her face all softened and transfigured, to her tall son for a third kiss, then turned her back and covered her eyes like a child at hide-and-seek, but called after him:

"Three minutes—remember."

There was a breathless moment in the darkness of the porch after he had closed the door; then he took the girl in his eager arms.

"At last!" he whispered, "Now you are coming to me. Your father and the black beast are both gone, so is the governor, and Lilys is at the Rectory all the time now. Even Helene and Lena are away. So the coast is clear."

"Please don't," she pleaded, struggling feebly in his embrace, "Tony'll be here any minute now. Oh, I'm so afraid. Please go. Tony——"

"Tony be hanged! Come, little lady, you *sent* for me. What did you mean?"

"I . . . I wanted to see you; that was all I meant, truly."

"Well, that wasn't all-I-meant-truly," he mocked, "and you knew it when you wrote. Didn't I tell you our last talk that I wouldn't be put off another time? You've nothing to be 'so afraid' about. We can go beyond reach, there being no blessed ties

that bind either of us here. But that's for you to say. Come to the House, the side entrance next the bow window and trust the rest to me. When can you come?"

There was no reply. He was holding her fast. He could not see, but he felt instinctively that she was hesitating—at last!

"When?" he repeated, "I'll get this infernal mess straightened in a day or two; if not we'll shake the whole business anyhow and go—to Cousin Maude's—say, Sunday just after dark. You will come?"

Still no reply. She was shaking in his grasp as from ague.

"It is 'Yes' or 'No' this time, Ruth; I am in earnest."

Another long silence.

"I reckon it is 'No,'" he said, suddenly releasing her, "Good night, mavourneen—and good bye. I wish you joy with your—quarryman."

"Won't . . . won't I see you any more?" she gasped, catching at his arm.

"Not till you've learned to say 'Yes'."

He descended the steps to the path, the path to the gate. Then his quick ear caught her slight movement, and her sligher whisper:

"Mr. Richard!"

He stood still, but he did not answer.

*"Richard!"*

He met her not quite half way. The woman's "half" of such a journey is always the greater.

"Is it 'Yes'?"

She covered her face with both hands. "Don't go."

He took her hands from her face. "Is——it——'Yes'?"

"I love you," she stammered.

He drew her against him in silent exultation. "Of course it is 'Yes,' you trifler, you gypsy!" He was groping for her lips in the darkness. "And of course you love me, and so you will come to me of your own will. For you know how long I have followed you and dreamed of you and wanted you." Their lips met and clung. "I'll watch for you day and night. Don't keep me waiting."

"Time's up," cried Marah's voice from the open door.

He drew the girl from the path of the lamp-light and spoke rapidly in her ear: "Listen, and don't forget a word I say. If you can get away for so much as an hour, hold a candle to your window, then draw the blind, then the candle a second time; and come to the side entrance of the House. The evening you are sure you can get away for good, hold the candle to your window three times, and repeat your signal. If I see it and it's O. K., I will

set a lamp in the middle office window north. Don't bring a thing, else they'll suspect. I'll get you anything you want afterward. We can go across country to Longmont for the train down, and there are plenty of places on the map and off it too."

"But——Miss Howard," faltered Ruth.

"Well, what of her?"

"Every one thinks you are going to marry *her*."

He smiled in the darkness over that emphasis.

"Just as every one thinks you are going to marry the black beast. Every one has another think coming, hasn't he?"

But in spite of this assurance that her triumph and her revenge would be quite complete, she clung to him, asking over and over the questions which helpless women have asked since the world began: "And you love me? You will always be good to me?" And each time he answered, just as men have ever answered the questions.

The clatter of hurrying hoofs sounded on the mill road below.

He held her to him, in spite of her fears, detailing the candle-signals again with reckless deliberation; held her and passionately kissed her bare throat, and lastly, leaving the moist poison of his mouth on hers, he walked slowly away in the darkness.

Marah held her lamp above her head and peered

out. She spoke sharply: "Ruth, what makes you so long? Is he there yet?"

"Yes, yes. He just come. I'm waiting for him to tie his horse. We'll be in right away, Marah."

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THE FIERCE VEXATION OF COMMUNITY.

SCHMIDT had warned Richard that there would be trouble if non-union men went to work. No sooner had Lodge Number Two declared a sympathetic strike than the lumber camp emptied itself into the already crowded Quarry Town.

Foreman Webb came down at once and sought an interview with his employer's son. The mill had shut down for want of men; yet there were the Longmont coal pits and the Little Star and the Jolly Jack all waiting for their lumber, to say nothing of the needs of Eldhurst herself. Would the quarry trouble be adjusted soon, so that he and his men could get back to work, or would non-union men be put in up there also, under a new foreman?

His employer's son informed him that he could go to regions eternally warm and the mill with him. He had his hands full just now with the blasted Swedes. Whereupon, Mr. Webb politely tendered his resignation, to take effect at once, and returned to his family preparatory to moving from the deserted camp.

Antonio was in his element. Quarry Town was overflowing with idlers and malcontents, fine material for his purpose. Yet must he keep himself well in the background; for he did not need to be told that his arrest just now would be a sweet morsel to young Eldreth's soul.

Thursday's ridicule of the awkward work of the raw "Dagos" grew by Friday into abuse on the part of the strikers and retaliation on the part of the non-unionists. And when the stage of blows and showers of stones and threats of worse was reached, the Boss's son, deep in his June number of the *Smart Set* when informed, gave utterance to several expressive oaths and himself went to the county-seat to have a number of deputies sworn in "for the protection of life and property at Eldhurst."

He then complacently returned to his hammock and his *Smart Set*.

All day Saturday the Italians worked under this protection.

Meantime, Lilys had kept her uncle, who was still confined to his bed, informed as to the progressive steps of the trouble: Tuesday night's meeting and its strike-declaration, the idle quarries, the shut-down mills, the arrival of the Italian miners, the coming to the village of the mill-hands, the clash on Friday between the workmen and the strikers

and the summoning of the deputies Saturday morning.

Again and again she had gone to her brother and entreated him to take a middle course, to use milder methods, even to compromise till their father could reach home; but he curtly requested her to give her woman's attention to what concerned women, assuring her that he was quite capable of conducting his own affairs unaided.

The Rector sent for him and John Howard sought him, but he as persistently returned word that he was pretty blanked busy. So Allan, wholly in ignorance as to what might be passing between father and son, or whether Richard was acting under instruction or independently, had to content himself with sending his brother-in-law a wire at each new step of the trouble. These telegrams, written out by Lilys, were sent to town by the trusty Pepito, since William was employed as Richard's *aide-de-camp*, and anyhow was drinking heavily.

The week had passed with no response to their dispatches, though they knew the address was correct, the Auditorium Annex, Chicago. But on Saturday evening Lilys burst into her Uncle's sick-room, breathless and excited, holding a yellow paper, unmistakable telegraphic.

"See what I found under a mountain of un-

opened mail on the office desk, where William's been piling everybody's letters all week. This has been opened, too, you see."

He read from the sheet she held down to him:

"REV. EDWIN ALLEN, ELDHURST, BOULDER, COLO.

Fourth wire received can't come for week or more send for Paul full authority.

ELDRETH."

Late as it was, Lils herself went to town with Pepito to send her uncle's telegram to Paul. But she received no response, though she had the message repeated. She then duplicated the dispatch to Michael Bradley. After what seemed hours to her, Bradley answered. Paul had been all day in Frances, he told her, but must have gone on into the country, as Bradley's telephone there had not found him. The postmaster had taken the message, to deliver it as soon as possible. Frances, she knew, was without rail or wire connection with Ward, the telephone being a private one between mines. But with this she had to be satisfied. So she returned to the Rectory, leaving Pepito with his own horse and Bayonne to meet the Sunday morning train from Ward.

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Sunday morning rose clear and tranquil over mountain and valley. There was an ominous quiet over the little village of tenement cottages about the quarries.

Presently, to the surprise of all, the Italians filed from their crowded quarters and down into the quarries, Schmidt and his deputies at their heels.

For the first time in the history of the big ranch, work was to be prosecuted on Sunday.

But the sweet-toned church bell rang out as usual and Edwin Allan, weak and trembling, slowly ascended the high pulpit, leaning on John Howard's arm. Song service had been announced, and the church was crowded to hear Lilys for the first time since her return from the East. The Rector conducted the service in a faint voice, sitting throughout the hour. He took for his text "Let us love one another," and the good man's personality and life pleaded even more eloquently than his tongue.

Throughout the anthems, choruses and quartettes, the entranced listeners could thread that matchless leading voice, subdued and softened though it was, like a strand of warm glowing rubies among lifeless pearls. In her one solo, "Love Divine All Love Excelling," Lilys sang as they had never heard her. All the skill with which her masters had reënforced her natural ability rose unconsciously to her aid, as, self-forgetting, she leaned over the gallery-rail and poured out her plea for the divine love in the hearts of men. There was more behind the incomparable voice than mere trained expression; there were earnestness, love of souls, the desire to uplift. For the

girl had knelt with her uncle before they left the Rectory, and now the hearers felt that the music was prayer no less than the invocation itself.

Then too, though they did not know it, she had solved to her own satisfaction some of the mysteries of human life; and this, since last she sang to them. She no longer needed to go about asking "What is the sweetest thing in the world?" No longer needed to yearn for that vague "something" which retreated, an *ignis fatuus*, before her. She had found it in a pair of earnest blue eyes, in the circle of a pair of strong arms, against an honest manly heart,—that something "very sweet and very satisfying," greater than Nature and more beautiful even than motherhood, the something in which her wakened soul could rest and be satisfied.

And in the human love she had approached nearer the divine, for the one interprets the other. The year away had taught her much of suffering, which also interprets love both human and divine. And, just as her lover had spoken a week ago as he never spoke before, spreading oil on the turbulent passions of the listening men, so now, actuated by the same incentive, stimulated by the same divine intoxicant, this woman loving and beloved, sang hushingly, quietly, to the same passions, thanking God in all humility for this first opportunity to supplement the work of the man she loved.

And a great peace fell over the congregation which the low-spoken benediction seemed to shut and seal in their hearts.

The tenantry went quietly home from the services, the effect of which the Rector prayed might last them at least throughout the day. For evening services were not to be thought of. He went to bed at once with a burning fever and Lilys sat beside him all day.

Baxter failed to come from Boulder for the afternoon service at Quarry Town hall, and only a handful of restless children greeted Howard and his daughter at the mission Sunday-school at four. The old Chorister could but notice the mob-like crowds that filled the street as he returned home, and he stopped at the Rectory to express grave fears for the peaceful termination of that Sabbath day.

But the Rector had fallen into a light slumber from which Lilys refused to waken him. She sat beside his bed in the gathering twilight and prayed for Paul to come. Woman-like, she felt that once her lover were there, all would be well. The morning train from Ward had not brought him, nor had any word come. The only other train down from the mining-camp was not due till eight-fifteen, evening. Pepito was waiting for it. She also must wait.

Her last appeal to her brother had been fruitless.

He seemed preoccupied and distraught. Either he had been drinking too much or he was troubled over his recent quarrel with Nina—so near their wedding-date, with the invitations out. She naturally felt a delicacy in asking Nina to appeal to him in the matter of the strike. She knew that in the quarrel Nina had been wholly blameless, and that Nina was nothing if not proud. And Mr. Howard's appeals had proven as fruitless as her own.

Darkness came on. The released Italians added their numbers to the already thronged little street. The crowd before Schmidt's cottage was particularly dense and noisy; for in the basement of the house were confined two of their number, arrested for stone-throwing. Two flaming torches had been fastened to the gate-posts, and the armed deputies sat in grim silence along the front porch.

## CHAPTER XL.

## THE BETROTHED.

RICHARD lay indolently in the veranda hammock within easy reach of the bottles and glasses on a small taboret. He was alone, but for William who dozed in the office. The great house was dark save for one dim light in an upper back room; and silent, save for the ticking of the hall clock and the sigh of the evening breeze draughting through the side entrance next to the bow-window where the door had been braced open.

The mental attitude of the young man could not be guessed from his bodily posture. Arguing from negatives, his thoughts were not near, for his back was to the lights of Quarry Town and to the lone cottage of the Menendez' on the left hill opposite and he had not once turned toward the big square house beyond the Rectory, a certain upper chamber of which was was lighted now for the first time in seven nights.

He had been lying for some time with his eyes half closed, a half-consumed cigarette between his lips, an uncut *Town Topics* in his hand. Now he

swung to a sitting position, poured a glass of wine, drank it, poured another and drank it, but the third glass he held half drained, and with elbows on knees and head in one palm, sat motionless.

He did not stir even when he heard the light ascending tread, did not lift his eyes even when she came up the steps and walked the veranda's length, and he did not speak until she paused beside him.

"I knew you would come," and there was little of welcome in his weary voice, "but the Lord only knows why you women can't make up your minds till the eleventh hour."

He was still studying the tips of his canvas shoes when the wind fluttered a soft fabric against his knees—white silk mull—and bore to his nostrils a faint perfume—white lilacs.

The glass shivered at his feet, staining his white shoes with its blood-red.

"Nina!"

"Yes, Richard; and I deserve your rebuke. I am late for a mission so important. Yet you knew I would come, even though when I went away there was a difference between us."

She sat down on the settee and began pulling nervously at her gloves, continuing rapidly:

"I am here to say two things: one is 'Forgive me'; the other is 'Let me help you.' I was the more to blame in our unbecoming disagreement—"

"*You say that?*"

"Yes, dear. Our difference seems trivial, indeed, in the light of this week's troubles, all the difficulties against which you are contending."

She waited, and as he made no reply, she reminded him gently, "I am asking your forgiveness, Richard."

He had remained standing. Now he sat down upon the other end of the settee, saying brusquely:

"Don't do it. It is not becoming to your severe classic style. Of course I agree with you. The woman is always to blame, especially when the man's crime is jealousy, with an uncontrollable desire for more kisses than the regulation one. I don't know how to give absolution. I'm so seldom called upon. Does the priest salute the fair penitent? No? Well, I'll not be severe in the matter of penance if the offense be not repeated."

With a frank smile she gave him one hand, still gloved, and he bore it to his lips.

"I wonder," he mused, "to what extent you would forgive me."

"*'Unto seventy times seven,'*" she quoted, smoothing out her long glove on the seat between them.

"I'm afraid you've passed those figure '*now alretty,*' as the Swedes say, and that you'll have to do some more multiplying."

"Now my other purpose," she said gravely, "Father and I are just from the village and you have no idea what a spirit prevails up there. The streets are thronged, and they are not all our own people. Two arrests have been made, and there are unrest and turbulence and open threats. Couldn't you, couldn't we——"

"No use talking about it, Nina. I know what I am doing; exactly what the governor would do if he were here." And Richard arose with as much impatience as he ever exhibited in the presence of his betrothed.

"If only you would go down and consult with Mr. Allan or let father come up and advise with you."

"You certainly have a flattering opinion of my executive abilities. How is it you are willing so soon to trust me with yourself and your affairs? Or will you want an advisory board of uncles and fathers then, I wonder." And he smiled carelessly down into the earnest face with its big serious eyes, eyes warm with the confidence he questioned.

"My confidence in you is not, cannot be, under discussion. But up there," with a gesture toward Quarry Town, "you are meeting force with force——"

"What else is there to do, in heaven's name? I suppose you'd have me turn the other cheek. That's

all a woman knows about handling those brutes. Didn't the governor meet a representative from their unions before he went away and all to no purpose? Didn't he plan with me the day he left? His back was scarcely turned before the strike was on. If they are testing my metal, they will find it is composed chiefly of lead, molded lead. I have turned those deputies over to Schmidt and they are there for business."

"But do you not think you or some of us should be up there?"

"Not when I can talk to a pretty woman. Don't worry. Schmidt can keep down the outfit. I sent him some courage a while ago by Sam—the Wilson brand, bottled at the distillery, so he'll hold the fort till morning. Now I'd rather not discuss the matter further, if it's just the same to you. It's bad enough for a man to have to think about it."

The girl arose and began drawing on her gloves again. He reached for his cap on the back of the settee.

"You need not go with me, thank you. I came alone and am not afraid. You must have a great deal to do. Or I can stay and help you if I may. There are no services this evening."

"I prefer to go with you. Those Dagos are a low drunken set; no telling where they may be prowling."

"It is very thoughtful of you, dear." She meant it in the double sense. He was thoughtful in that he ignored her suggestion to remain there any later alone with him. She came and stood beside him on the first step, giving him her hand with its unbuttoned glove, palm up.

"I am surprised at you, anyway, Miss Howard," he said with mock severity, as he began fastening the tiny clasps of the glove, "that you should venture to come to the House when you know Lilys is at the Rectory, and the governor gone and even Helene is not here to chaperone you. You are getting reckless. What of your good name?"

She laughed a pleasant laugh. "I fancy my name is 'good' enough hereabout to stand against one such indiscretion, and your reputation——"

"Go on. What of my reputation?"

"Is such that a lady may spend an hour with you, unattended, and still retain her good name."

"Thanks. Still I'm something of a sinner. I shouldn't wonder you've heard things."

"Do you mean things against you? Where? From whom, pray?"

He gave her a swift, keen glance.

"Oh, here at Eldhurst. You teach over there," nodding toward the Swedish village.

"You cannot be in earnest. You cannot imagine any one, my father even, coming to me, to *me*, with

the faintest ill report of you. I instruct in the village; I do not gossip. All I have ever heard against you, you, yourself, have told me."

"And I have 'unpacked my heart,' to you, haven't I? You know that I am addicted to muscatel and Egyptians; that I kiss every pretty girl who's willing; that I bet a little, and spend more and waste most. But you'll correct all these little eccentricities after—I beg pardon, but what date was it you named? And, ahem! after that date, you won't remind me that it's ten, will you? and you'll let me kiss you more than the regulation once, won't you?"

The girl flushed warmly under his bold laughing eyes, and he gave the gloved hand a squeeze before she confusedly withdrew it.

"Sit down here a minute," he commanded, recovering the hand and drawing her down to the first step beside him.

She glanced uneasily toward the north hills and shook a grave head.

"Oh, confound the Swedes!" he cried petulantly. "They won't turn the world over. Think of me for thirty minutes. I've had no one to love, none to caress for a whole strenuous week. You might be nice to a fellow once in a while, by way of practice, you know. So," and he began pulling off the gloves he had fastened, retaining a bare hand. "Now tell me all about this precious date of ours. It's

to be a quiet affair, I believe you said; no flourish of trumpets, beating of tom-toms, nor other evidences of bad taste. I'm a bashful boy with no mamma, you know. Whom have you asked to the obsequies?"

"Only Fred and Nellie Nolan——"

"All right."

"And Harry Wentworth——"

"The yellow journal," he groaned, "full account; harrowing details. Who else?"

"No one except father, and Lilys and Paul, of course."

"Paul. Humph! But I reckon one can't object to one's brother, to be. Just isn't Babe a fool to turn down Bert and Harry and her rich foreigner all for that half-breed?"

"I think you know I am very fond of Paul. He has been a brother to me."

"So he is to most girls, even to her. That's his long suit. He nearly broke my fool head once last summer for hinting that he was something more to her," and Richard rubbed his head with reminiscent tenderness.

"For a long time I had known that he fairly worshiped her, but I did not dream he would ever betray himself. I do not at all understand it, for he has uncommon self-control."

Her companion laughed. "Well, *I* understand

it. What has control to do with it if you're in love and the girl is pretty and the lights are low? Besides, you don't know Babe and the sort of woman she stands for, the woman to whom love is the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, and then some. Her heart is the charged mine; her lips the fuse. Do but kiss her and—something happens, something that maybe the fellow wasn't looking for. If he wasn't, worse luck, for she'd carry Saint Anthony off his feet. No, you don't understand; never will understand the passion behind a resolution such as hers. She too knew of his 'love unspoken' long before that 'uncommon self-control' was shattered. Also she was wise upon methods of shattering. If any scruples whatsoever had risen in his mind against marrying her, do you know what she would have done? She would have turned her back forever upon Eldhurst and all it meant to her, would have followed to Ward, to the mine itself, and would there have deliberately compromised herself before he could prevent. Oh, she's the sister of her brother, all right; has good red blood in her veins."

Miss Howard looked her incredulity.

"Yes, she would have done just that," he affirmed, "for when I accused her of formulating the plan, she laughed and asked was I a mind-reader."

"After all, her plan was an altogether safe one. for had she carried it out, he would have made her

his wife before they were an hour older, as she very well knew. But I cannot imagine Paul Menendez confessing his love and not offering marriage in the same breath. With such as he, the one implies the other."

"It did in this case, and why shouldn't it? He has everything to gain by such a union. But he has my sympathy, poor beggar! She'll even up all my old scores against him."

"They are very happy; it is a delight to hear her. And he is far from being a beggar. Mr. Bradley told father that his silent partner in the Hopeful all this time has been none other than Paul, and that he, Paul, is to become sole owner within a few days. That's why he isn't down here with Lilys this week. They are making the transfer and are also putting in some new machinery. Bradley is to be his manager. All this in confidence, for he does not wish his ownership known. He has not told Lilys. She thinks he has nothing but his salary as manager."

Richard whistled softly. "The Hopeful! Well, he'll need it. For Babe's something of a spender herself, and she's bound to be disinherited if she persists in this latest whim. In which case, incidentally, Miss Howard's husband becomes sole heir. See?"

Nina sighed. "I don't like to think of dear Lilys living way up at Ward, while I am mistress of her

old home. But she would go to far Mindanao if he said so; and you know your father insists upon our living here. I had such a nice letter from him as he was leaving Denver. He regrets that he can not be with us on Friday next; I am to have my choice of the Huntington-Eldreth jewels, after Lilys, and he said other nice things."

"And now you will have all the jewels, for none of us will dare recognize her, except, I suppose, Allan. Did you write the governor about Babe and her new . . . brother?"

"Indeed no. Paul insists, and rightly, that that is his prerogative. But he will wait your father's return and tell him in person. Isn't that just like Paul?"

"Sure. Fools have a penchant for rushing in where angels would at least send up their cards. Well, he has my best wishes. I don't covet his job. And you may as well begin masses for his soul, for there's every promise of a funeral instead of a wedding. But you did not finish your list of our guests."

"If we ask Paul, there is his mother."

"Of course; the inch always has its ell."

"And if you don't mind," timidly, "Ruth Bradley."

Her companion sent her another searching glance, which she misinterpreted.

"I know she is not one of us, but she is a good girl and loves me devotedly and we have taught together so long, you know. But I have not asked her yet, so if you——"

"Oh, I don't mind; that's your affair. And where are we to spend our honeymoon?"

"Here, I supposed."

"Not on your life. Consider my youth, my extreme modesty, and name some sequestered spot far from the maddening crowds of Manitou and its like. Babe has named the hunting lodge—the very place "He" wanted, (because of pleasant memories doubtless.) But there are other retreats in the wilds where I may have you alone for one divine, foolish fortnight, to teach you to love, honor and obey."

"I've learned all that," sadly.

"But some women need a post-graduate course."

He had slipped down a step or two and now with a sudden boyish movement he leaned, resting his dark head in her lap, his half-closed eyes upon the two gate-torches of the Schmidt cottage, that menaced demon-like through the deepening gloom.

The girl ventured a hand upon the head in her lap, an act so unusual that her heart quickened painfully. Hers was a deep, undemonstrative nature, habitually reserved and self-contained. She was sadly conscious that her love and loyalty far exceeded those of her handsome, heedless lover, and

throughout their engagement she had striven with all a proud woman's strength to conceal the sorry truth from those about her, most of all from him. She must. He was so hot-blooded, so vehement, so immoderate.

As for him, he had always taken her coldness for granted, her passionless manner as a matter of course. He called dutifully once a week, leaving at ten and taking his one good-night kiss with befitting gratitude. What difference did it make? She was well-born, royal-mannered, would grace Eldhurst, and her children would becomingly perpetuate the old name. The woman one marries is never quite like one's sweethearts. "Love me little, love me long" must have originated with the same idiot who invented monogamous marriage.

His meditations were interrupted by the hand on his hair and—*what!* Never before had he known her to shed a tear, at least for him. He sat up, peering into her face. It wore an expression wholly new to him. Over the high-bred features, usually so serene, a faint pink was suffused that softened and warmed them from within, like a lighted transparency. Little ringlets of the soft red-brown hair had escaped the severe braid, and lay like tendrils against her neck. The strong lips, the lowered eyelids were twitching.

He drew one sharp breath, caught both her hands and crushed them against his heart, his cheeks, his

mouth. She drew back, but a richer color responded to his caresses. He pulled himself up to the step beside her and thrust his face close to hers.

"By God, you *do* love me!"

Her face congealed instantly, but there was evident effort in her controlled voice:

"Have you ever doubted it?"

"But love, *love* I mean, like a woman, not a statue. And you could, you could do it, once you let yourself go. You're not wholly of marble, my Galatea," with his boy's laugh, "You're part human already. Let us see if you are not."

He brought her to her feet beside him, but she held him away, her hands against his breast.

"Don't, Richard. Wait. Listen to me."

He dropped his arms at that, and stood scowling at her rigid, forbidding form.

"'Wait'? I've done nothing else. 'Listen'? I know it by heart. Every since our betrothal it's been 'Don't, Richard.' 'You shouldn't say this,' 'You shouldn't do that,' 'Desire is unholy; we should live white lives.' If our engagement hasn't been dead-level white, whose has? During the entire two years I've never known you to do one womanly thing, to follow one live human impulse, to obey your heart—if you have one. And what have you ever given me worth the taking? A man may burn, starve, gnaw his heart out, while you——"

He flung away and began walking the veranda, his hands plunged deep in his pockets.

"And then you and your kind wonder in your frigid souls why we men——" He broke off again, then cried out, "Upon my word, I'm beastly sick of the whole game. Am I a schoolboy to be corrected and denied and straight-jacketed? And after Friday, what? Oh, you'll find who's master. You'll pay the score—in full."

She was standing statue-like where he had left her, looking with strained eyes away to the south over the drifts of the young orchard. He at the far end of the veranda stared north at the dull lights of Quarry Town and at the lone cottage on the left hill opposite.

And why, at such a moment, should a certain window of that lone cottage suddenly spring to light? And why did the light vanish, then appear . . . . and vanish . . . . . and appear AGAIN?

## CHAPTER XLI.

“UNTO SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN.”

THE man stared stupidly at the now darkened window, and for the moment the moon-touched hill-sides blurred. Then—all the blood within him leaped and clamored.

He started forward, but stopped, turned and looked at the figure at the end of the veranda.

All unconscious of this by-play in their hurrying tragedy, she was leaning against the lattice, and the faint moon etherealized the refined face, the reposeful figure, the quiet elegance of attire, the unstudied grace of attitude. He turned sharply from her, steeling himself; but between him and the silhouette of the solitary cottage there appeared that other tawdry-clad figure, with its coarse flesh, its pert Irish face. And his strong æsthetic sense rose in revolt against the clamorous blood; the good angel of Taste wrestled with Desire.

Again that signal window flamed and faded,—once, twice, *thrice!* But in a wave of uncontrollable repulsion, he turned his back upon it.

“Nina!” The tone was tremulous with appeal.

She came to meet him, both answering hands out-reached. He clung to them as a sinking man to a spar.

His eyes questioned her.

“ ‘Unto seventy times seven,’ ” she whispered.

“ And you love me? ”

Again her eyes met his with the faithfulness of a dog's. “ I would die for you. ”

“ Yes, I know, but as a woman,—soon to be all mine? ”

“ So much that it *hurts* me; it has seemed I must tell you or—die. ”

In her earnestness, she clasped his shoulders and lifted the delicate beauty of her face close to his. It was too much for the clamorous blood, too much for half-formed resolution, too much even for the steady respect he had always held for this one woman. For Taste joined forces with Desire, the æsthetic with the sensuous; the best within him swung about and re-enforced the worst. With the exultant cry of the brute at sight of its rightful mate, he seized and crushed her to him, kissing her with savage passion.

“ Prove it! Prove it! ” he panted.

“ What—why, what can you mean? ” She was straining from his grasp and gazing at him with fearsome questioning.

With his burning face pressed to hers, he stam-

mered: "Stay here—with me—now . . . and—" He ended in a thick, half-articulate whisper.

She recoiled in horror, as from pestilence itself.

"You are mad. You do not know what you are saying."

"Yes, I do. Yes, I do. It's you who don't know what I'm asking, all I am asking. It means—everything to us both. I can't go up to you. Haven't you known that all this time? Come down to me, sweetheart, for my sake; for your own sake. It will be counted to you for righteousness. This once, if you love me, stay with me. Put your arms around me, give me your lips, your whole love. I'm not mad; I'm not even drunk. And I swear to you, I'll never drink again, never look at another woman, so help me God! *Come.*"

"Now God help me," she moaned, striving to hide her shamed face, "And *this*—from *you!*"

"Who but me?" he whispered thickly, trying to uncover her face.

But she broke from him and imperiously motioned him back. As she turned toward the steps, he fell on his knees before her, clasping her waist.

"Don't go, Nina, don't leave me—the most God-forsaken, most devil-tempted of men; not now, not till morning—then it will be all right. You will regret—As you love me, Nina—"

She stooped and half lifted him, then met the dangerous pleading of his eyes with pure rebuking gaze.

"I do love you. God knows I would give my body to be burned for you. But my soul—Richard, Richard, it is not mine to give. It is His, blood-bought."

He stood a moment, dumb with baffled desire, vainly seeking for one weak point in her defense.

"Then . . . you . . . will . . . not . . . stay?"

"God helping me, no. Think of your own soul——"

The man broke into loud laughing.

"Yes, yes, my soul, my precious soul. Who'll buy? It's for sale tonight, cheap. One little sin, one little white sin, would redeem it, but she doesn't think it worth the price, the woman who loves me. *Loves!* Bah, the barefooted Mexican girl of the Lower Ranch could teach her; the chorus girl, the girl of River Front Slums—all could tell her that to love is to give. But I should have known: head against heart; prude against woman; petty scruples against human nature. Madame Grundy, the conventions, the proprieties—world without end. Ha, ha!"

He bent over the shrinking woman and dealt his parting taunt.

"And so I would be drawing too heavily upon

the future; anticipating the priest's mummary by six whole days. Six orthodox days. Why, God save us, woman, that was time enough to make heaven and earth. And it's time enough to find hell."

He went rapidly from her and flung open the office door. She heard the quick rasp of a match, saw a lamp flicker to life. Then he sent the middle north window-shade whirring toward the ceiling and set the lamp on the sill.

William, the coachman, was snoring drunkenly on the floor. His master kicked him vigorously.

"Get up, you damned log. The closed carriage—*now*."

The man staggered up grunting, and limped away.

The master would have passed out and on up the stairs, but the woman placed herself before him.

"Where are you going, Richard Eldreth?"

"To the devil!"

She caught his arm with both her strong white hands.

"*No!*" It was half command, half plea. "Come with me, dearest, come home with me."

"And stay till ten, and be shut out with one chaste kiss! Never again. There are women not so chary with their gifts. Either you stay—on my terms—or I go. It is not too late. Which is it?"

And his hot hand closed over her fingers, his breath burned her cheek.

"It is—*neither*," she answered firmly, lifting an unflinching gaze, "If you have no thought for me in this,—of my name, the woman's purity I dreamed alas! that you gloried in; if you are reckless of your immortal soul and its doom, think then, I beg you, of your best mortal treasures—of your name, your honor, of the high hopes centred in you. Think of that old name borne by stainless knights and irreproachable nobles—hereditary gentlemen. Would you drag its high splendors in the mire? Think of the honor of your house, untarnished through all the centuries behind you. Would you make it a mockery and a by-word? And for what? The brief, ignoble pleasure of an hour! Oh shame! an Eldreth, the last of the Eldreths, false, coward-false to his deserted self!"

His relaxed hands fell from hers; his chin sank to his chest. But with firm fingers gripping his arm, she continued her torrent of convicting words:

"What reasoning is this? You would have me commit sin to prevent sin! You are beside yourself. You have dared to speak words to me tonight which I never dreamed of hearing from any man, much less from him pledged to honor and protect. Richard drunk, mad (what you will) with power to humiliate and degrade, must be vindicated by Richard

sober. He must redeem himself—and he will. You and I, with father and Lilys and Mr. Allan, if he be able, must go at once to yonder village and do our utmost to quiet and disperse that mob, else God will surely visit His wrath upon us for wilful negligence. What right have we to idle here, what right to one another, with that menace of evil settling over us? How dare you think of leaving at such a time, with helpless women and children, your sister, your promised wife,—all of us looking to you for very safety? I am not asking what nor who calls you, but only: Is it, can it be, a duty more imperative than that which binds you here? O Richard, I would give my peace of mind, my life, to save you from sin. But you are not going to sin. I will not believe you against yourself. You are coming with me. You have not loved me. There is another woman. At last, I am convinced, and you shall be released. But now there is but one thing—*your duty.*”

And all the while she is leading him, willing or unwilling, down the steps and across the yard toward the north. Out near the summerhouse, they meet the closed carriage.

“William,” she says in tones of quiet command, “you are to put away the horses. They will not be needed tonight.”

The carriage turns about. The man at her side

lifts his hand, but it is arrested in mid-air. A sudden glare, too red for the moon, is enveloping them. Flames are leaping from Quarry Hill. There are confused cries, and by the fire's flare, the press and sway of the crowd round the burning cottage can be clearly seen.

They stand helplessly rooted to the spot, stand in reality only minutes, though it seems ages, while the flames mount, waver, and at last fall to a cloud of dense smoke.

Some one comes running toward them up the hill, and Sam's voice cries:

"Mr. Richard—you? Schmidt's house is afire, one end, an' he's in t'other; dassent show hisself. An' he wants you—quick!"

Then it is the dazed man spring to life and action.

"Get me Bayonne; don't saddle."

"Bayonne's in town waitin' f'r Paul, but I'll git y' somethin'," and he disappears, running.

"Paul—Oh, thank God!" bursts from the girl's lips. Then, collecting herself. "But we cannot wait for him. Let us go."

"You go to the House."

They have changed places once more. The masculine dominates. Matter sways mind.

"Let me go with you, Richard," she entreats.

"No."

"They love me; they will listen to me," she implores.

"They don't love me, but—*they'll listen.*"

He is examining his revolver by the uncertain light.

"But there is danger, and my place is by your side. It is still my right, not hers, the Other Woman. You shall not stop me," she cries passionately, "I will follow; I will crawl if I must!"

He stares at her in fascinated wonder.

And he has doubted this woman's love; has called her cold; has all but deserted her for——

Sam comes, pulling a barebacked colt. Richard seizes the bridle, grasping a handful of the horse's mane. She is close to him, but she does not interpose nor speak. Her brave lips even smile. He is going to danger, but also to his Duty.

"Go to the House," he repeats sternly.

"And you to that mob? *Never!*"

She looks every inch the queen, facing him there in the moonlight, defying him, standing upon her right to share his lot whatsoever.

He drops the bridle then, takes one stride and catches her in his arms. He pushes her head back against his shoulder and gazes deep, deep into her eyes.

"Great God!" he cries, infinite self-contempt in his tone, "what a fool I've been. There *ISN'T* any Other Woman—in all earth nor heaven. Wait for me, my love; stay with me, safe as a saint. I'm coming back to you—*Richard sober!*"

## CHAPTER XLII.

## WHO IS GUILTY?

WHEN her uncle awoke, Lilys told him the condition of affairs and of Mr. Howard's fears. At once he arose and dressed, saying they would go up to the village and see what could be done toward quieting and sending the people to their homes.

As they ascended the hill, gazing ahead with straining apprehension, the sick man supported by the girl, they could see by the gate torches and by the now strengthened moon how the crowd had converged and was packed before Schmidt's cottage, which was still smoking at the rear, their first intimation that there had been a fire.

As they paused for rest by the roadside, they saw a horseman from the House road with difficulty force his way through the crowd before the gate; saw him dismount and enter the cottage.

At this the Rector and Lilys pressed forward with all haste; but almost immediately the cottage door opened, two men emerged, the dark row of figures along the porch came to life and all descended to the throng below.

There was what seemed to be a parley, while the two watchers held their breath. Then several shots rang out in quick succession. The mob surged, wave-like, back from the gate, but at once closed in again.

Before the sick man and his companion could move or speak, the swift hoof-beats of a running horse sounded on the stony path below them, and they drew away to the roadside. As the rider flashed past, Lilys recognized Bayonne. But before the horseman reached the crowd, the white-clad form of a woman ran before him into the very press of the mob, and two more reports broke the stillness, followed by a chorus of wild cries.

The rider flung down at the gate, and by the flare of the torches they could see him motioning the crowd away; could see the men fall back and remain; could see Paul stooping over some objects on the ground.

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“Ruth!”

“Tony, Tony, is it you? Oh, for heaven’s sake what’s happened over there?”

Antonio dropped upon the upper step of Marah’s porch and stared before him into the white night. In his excitement he did not notice that his companion had a shawl about her head and that the skirt of her best dress, in which she was clad, was all dew-draggled.

"Marah's with Hilma, and I've been alone all night; it must be most morning. No one's thought of me here all by myself, and oh, I've been so scared. I saw the fire and heard the shooting and——"

"And you've been fairly eating your heart out with fears for *your lover*. Why, how could you stay away? Most of the women were there, and both the ladies in their Sunday clothes——"

"Oh, tell me what has happened—tell me!"

To her nervous anxiety, wrought almost to the point of exposure, his manner seemed more than deliberate, his speech unusually slow.

"You saw the fire," he began, "It was Schmidt's house, though he'd put his prisoners in the cellar to prevent that very thing. He'd had Andersen and Scanlan arrested for assault. The shed kitchen burned, but was pulled away before the rest caught. Then Schmidt got scared and sent for the Boss's son."

He paused, causelessly, and though he remained silent for ages, it seemed to the listener, she dared not press the narrative.

"As soon as he came, he ordered the crowd to disperse, but they did not obey to any great extent. Without a second order, he had the deputies fire. The Hansen boy was killed and some Italians wounded. (All this, of course, before Paul got there.) Well, the crowd didn't break up even then,

but kept jamming up to the gate, where Eldreth stood just outside, right in the torch-light. Oh, he's devilish brave—in some things. Then some one fired from the crowd and . . . ”

Again the narrator paused and sat with his eyes fixed upon the trembling fingers fumbling with the shawl-fringe. And again, she refrained from pressing him.

“ . . . And Eldreth fell. And just as Paul reached the gate, the sheriff returned the shot and dropped his man—Swensson.”

Another long silence, and this time she had to break it.

“ And he—Mr. Richard? ”

“ They took him over to the House and have sent to Boulder and even to Denver, but *cui bono?* All the doctors in the state can't save him.”

The girl fell down upon the lower step and for a moment not a word was spoken. Then she lifted a livid face with accusing eyes.

“ It's you have killed him, Antonio Garia; this is your work.”

He stared down at her. “ I wish to God it was, since you care so much. *No, no es eso,*” he went on coolly, pulling his revolver from its holster. “ The damned thing wouldn't go off,” and he showed her the cylinder with the six cartridges in place. He regarded the weapon reproachfully, then flung it back

with an exclamation of disgust. "They found Gustav's, one load gone, still in his hand. But—it's well worth hell. Saved some hell here if he'd done it a year ago."

"And all because of a little gold chain, a great thing to shoot a man for. And she asked him for it; he told me so himself."

"*Ay que necio!*" blurted out Antonio scornfully, "You fool! you. . . . you . . . *Madre de Dios!* were yo uborn yesterday? Why,——"

He stopped for want of words and another pause ensued. The girl did not look up as she hesitatingly asked her next question.

"Did he . . . did Mr. Richard . . . say anything?"

Again the man waited long before answering. Then he said, more than ever deliberately:

"He spoke just one short word, the name of the woman God's mercy has prevented his marrying."

She started guiltily. "Who—whose?" she stammered, "What do you mean?"

"*Whose?* Why, what do *you* mean? He couldn't marry but one of them according to law, could he? *Whose?* Of whom does a man think at a time like that? Did you imagine he'd call for that divorced woman in Denver or for some of his chorus girls or for some of his Quarry Town girls?"

"Only . . . I didn't know he was going to marry her."

“Oh, you didn’t? Really! And the engagement announced two years ago in the papers? You didn’t, and you teaching alongside her all that time and she wearing that big Eldreth diamond? Well, he was. The day was next Friday. My brother mailed the invitations. You didn’t happen to receive one—no? They were engraved on satin paper, Pepito said, with a crest and a motto in a language you and I couldn’t read; and they said: ‘John Howard requests you to the marriage of his daughter Nina, to Mr. Richard Huntington Eldreth.’ Now do you know which *one* he had decided to honor, and which *ones* to dishonor? Yes?”

The girl was staring fixedly across at the House, at the steady stream of light from the middle window of three, but she did not reply.

“And she was right there,” pursued Antonio, “just an instant before Paul. No fault of hers that it’s not she lying over there at the House with a bullet through her. But,—*gracias a Dios!* He knows what He is about; so she got before the man only in time to catch the ball through the flesh of her arm and a shade too late to save him.

“Oh, there’s a woman for you, a thoroughbred, a queen, a saint. They two had quarreled over at the house (William heard it all), but knowing he was going to danger, she followed to share it. Right between him and that mob she ran, her face to it,

her arms flung out; and, bleeding though she was, she and Paul lifted him together. She took his head in her lap, wiped the blood from his mouth, and her hands never shook; and there wasn't a tear, nor a bitter word, though she knew his murderer was there among us. Just leaned down to make out what he was trying to say to her, and I tell you, when she lifted her hand for silence, you could have heard a mouse move. No wonder he loved her!

“While they were waiting for the carriage, she motioned the sheriff to bring the prisoner nearer; and she talked to him so low we couldn't hear, but Sam, who was nearer, holding Bayonne, said afterward that she asked Gustav two or three questions, just enough to get the truth, Eldreth being unconscious by this time. Sam said she turned as white as the man she was holding, but right away she lifted up her head and told Gus he could go away feeling easy about his wife; if she grew worse, she, Miss Howard, would see to it that he was brought back in time, and in any case the child should be taken care of. Miss Howard herself would adopt it as her very own if by any means she could gain the consent of the Andersens. Poor Gus! his face till then was as hard as rocks, but at that we all saw him go right down by her and cry like a child and beg she'd forgive him. And it was she comforted him—think of it! Took his handcuffed hand and said

that his temptation had been great, and that she would pray for God to forgive him. Oh, I tell you, Old Eldreth is right; blood tells. Common folks don't do those uncommon acts.

"As for the rest, the Italians will live; Gustav's wound is slight, he will live—to hang——"

"To hang!" she broke in, unable longer to control herself, "when you . . . you brought on the strike with that speech of yours; when you are the murderer—you!"

"*Como! de veras?*" he cried in mock astonishment, "*Es posible?*" Then leaning down to her, his gleaming black eyes piercing her through and through: "If my gun hadn't failed me (and I never knew it to fail before) do you know who would be guilty of that man's blood, Ruth Bradley? Not I, though I would be where poor Gus is tonight. Tell me, who was it sent a message to Eldreth last Sunday evening? Who had him with her Thursday night in the absence of the man she is pledged to marry? Whom did I hear called 'Eldreth's latest' no longer ago than yesterday? *Dios mio!* and *you* dare to sit there and accuse *me* of murder!"

He rose and began tramping up and down before her.

"*Si, si!* A woman wins a man with her pretty pink face and soft, innocent ways. He becomes her

willing slave, even though his father warns him against the Anglo blood, remembering his own mistake. But he loves the pink face, he has tasted the sweet mouth, and he will not be warned. He offers her honorable marriage. But his love is not enough, nor that of her father, nor of such friends as Nina Howard and Paul Menendez. No sooner does her betrothed look the other way than she must lift her lips to the first scoundrel who has a flattering word for her. Then when the mere thought of it rouses the devil in her lover's heart (which is only flesh and blood) he is an assassin, a murderer; while she, the innocent, the immaculate—*es admirable!*”

He was becoming more excited as he tramped, his gestures more rapid, more frequent:

“I brought on the strike, you say. *Muy bien*; I did. But if my promised wife had dealt a rebuff, square and unmistakable in the face of the first advance of that scoundrel, would I have meddled with Paul's good work? Would I have made that speech in meeting when he was away, and kicked up this row? Who stirred the devil in me? Who's at the bottom of the whole damnable business? Who's answerable for three lives and a mix that may never untangle? *Who?*”

He did not wait for an answer from the cowering form on the lower step, but railed on:

“Hilma will die, but who pities her? The love

of an honest man was not enough for her either. She too must have a fine gentleman lover. Well, she got what she was looking for. Women do, mostly. If they love the flesh, they get it; if the spirit, that. There is Miss Howard: she came near finding good in the devil, merely because she was looking for good. Even after that brute had quarreled with her (for a cause that was all honor to her), after he'd taunted her and threatened to go off with some other woman if she denied him (some woman 'not so chary with her gifts') after all that, what? When finds he must face that mob and death, likely, and so comes to his true, sober self, then what? Why, this, mark you well: When she pleads her right above the other woman's to share his danger, there, even before Sam, he takes her in his arms and tells her the fool he's been; that for him here ISN'T any Other Woman; that she's to stay there at the House as safe as a saint, for all he'll harm her. And when he's dying, when a man tells the truth if he knows how, he asks over and over, not God's mercy, but her forgiveness, and says he's never for one hour loved any one, body or soul, but *her*. And not a message, not a thought for the Other Woman. I'm here to tell you that if a man's got one little clean spot in him, he's going to show it to the woman who's looking for clean things; who's clean herself and demands cleanness."

He had stopped before her, and was hurling his words like stones down upon the head hidden in the shawl:

“He has never for one hour loved any one, body or soul, but Nina Howard! That’s damned hard on the Swede mother of that *black-haired* baby up at Andersen’s. And it’s something for that Other Woman to take with her to her grave, since it seems to be the only word he’s left her. God takes care of fools, they say; never lets them quite fall; but if I were that Other Woman, I’d not stop with thanks to God. I’d crawl and kiss Nina Howard’s feet for the sanctified lie she told before us all about the carriage. I’d give my life, such as it was, to Paul Menendez who, once for all time sealed Sam’s mouth and fixed it so ’s William will hold his tongue.”

“Antonio!”

With shaking limbs and chattering teeth she had dragged herself and was clasping his knees. He stood looking down at her with bloodshot, tragic eyes. He did not stoop to her, but talked on, half to himself:

“He shall have my life, such as it is, but *Cuerpo de Dios!* will he ever trust me again? ever respect me? He would not even let me help.” His voice choked and his chin sank to his breast. “He could see I’d broken my promises to him, and he seemed to know, in that way he has of seeing through

things, that most of the row was my doings. *Dios!* I felt like a sneak when he put his hand on my shoulder and his eyes through me and said: 'Stand here, Garia, and wait till I come.' Then he picked out men all around me, Johnson and his son and Fredricks and Old Peterson and Sam and my little Pepito, to help get Hansen home and the Dagos in and Eldreth over to the House, and they all looked at me as though I were some low cur,—I, who've always stood right next to Menendez in everything."

The man lifted his head, a new light in his dark eyes.

"But he'll see, if only he'll give me another chance up at Ward with him. I'll show him yet that Antonio Garia, son of his father, can be depended upon. For he said truth in his talk with me after the others were gone: that the woman doesn't walk God's earth who should be able to destroy a man's usefulness, undermine his manhood, spoil his whole life. I know that even Lilys Eldreth couldn't do it for him; and you shan't for me."

He stooped and gripped her shoulder fiercely. "No, and you shan't spoil any other man's life either." And he pulled her roughly to her feet, glaring at her menacingly.

But she fell again at his feet, groveling and whimpering.

"Get up!" he said, moving backward, contempt

in his tone, "I ought to, I ought to! My father would do it in my place. But no—*estoy resuelto*."

Even her imperfect knowledge of Spanish told her she was safe. She scrambled to her feet and stood, half fearful still, studying his expression.

"Tony," she whispered, edging closer to him, "don't you love me? You used to."

The fire dulled in his eyes.

"Yes," he said listlessly, "Yes, I love you; I can't do anything else."

She gave a little cry, the note of a spoiled child at the gaining of its own way, and sinking against his breast, lifted her lips close to his.

"And now we . . . we will . . . ?"

He turned his face away from her, and looked off toward the whitening east.

"Yes," he said, "we'll marry. I promised Paul."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## “FRIDAY NEXT.”

RICHARD ELDTRETH died an hour after they laid him upon his own bed, not once regaining consciousness.

The wires tingled with vain summons for his father. The Auditorium Annex, when asked, replied that Mr. Eldreth was out of the city, they did not know where, but had retained his room with them, with instructions to keep mail for another week.

So the funeral, delayed as long as expedient, finally took place on Friday, a minister from Boulder officiating. The church was packed with townsmen, and ranchmen from miles around. The flower-covered casket rested at the foot of the chancel. In the Eldreth pew sat the three mourners, Edwin Allan, Lilys and Nina. The service was simple, all three had wished it so; and the music of Howard's choosing was especially touching.

The choir's second soprano was about to sing the closing solo. The organ's muffled reverberations intoned a deep, full chord, and the girl walked slowly forward and stood throughout the murmured prelude. She touched the first notes of the soul-cry

tenderly, pleadingly, her pure voice growing in sweetness and power as the words' full meaning took possession of her :

“ O Thou, who shunned not Calvary,  
My tortured soul pours out to Thee  
Its anguished pleading, Help Thou me,  
Thou Mighty One ! ”

The organ interlude sighed into silence and the girlish voice caught up the tone again, one single, tremulous note, when—what happened? how was it? The tone was snatched from her, and she was left standing mute and terrified, while her wondering audience heard another voice, Lilys's voice, and yet not Lilys's voice; deeper, sadder than death, wider than the world's woe; another voice, uplifting the failing, melody, and bearing it on, grandly, irresistibly.

“ Marah ! ”

The electrified congregation sat upright and immoveable as, from somewhere back near the door, she moved down the centre aisle, her arms slowly uplifting, her eyes agleam with the strange fire, her body swaying rhythmically to the swell of the harmony.

“ My feet are pierced by many a thorn,  
My human heart is passion-torn,  
So weak for all the burdens borne,  
Thou Loving One ! ”

She was at the foot of the chancel now, standing beside the flower-covered casket; but her eyes were lifted and fastened upon the compassionate face of the Thorn-crowned One above the high altar.

“ Behold me ! At Thy feet I lie !  
Undone, for mercy thus I cry.  
Uplift, uphold me, else I die,  
Thou Pitying One ! ”

As the strain ceased, her gaze descended to the set face in the open casket, that beautiful face with its long dark lashes and its soft damp hair. And there rose a cry, piercing, heart-rending, the cry universal of mother-love and mother-anguish for her first-born. She threw herself down upon the casket, her face against the face of the dead, and a tiny stream issuing from her lips stained the calm white face beneath.

Then the congregation found volition and speech. A murmur rose. The officiating minister started down the chancel steps; Allan opened the door of the Eldreth pew, and the village doctor came pushing forward.

But Paul reached her first and lifting the slight figure in his arms, turned to the side door. The people were pressing forward, but the way was cleared for him, close-walled by awed faces. He crossed the yard to the Rectory, Allan and the physician behind him.

The Rector led the way up to an unused room, her own in the old time, where a snowy bed seemed awaiting some one. Paul laid her down and hung anxiously above her. The physician, put his hand to her heart, felt the quick pulse, listened to the incoherent muttering and looked grave. Neither of the men asked a question and he volunteered no information. He administered a drug and with explicit orders to admit no one, he returned to the interrupted service.

The two sat at either side of the bed, each clasping a hand of the sleeper. As she passed under the opiate she uttered broken words that gave glimpses of her past, so little known to one of them. She spoke the names "Edwin," and "Edith;" she repeated how useless it was to destroy the letter; she assured "Manuel" that she would be his; she begged to see her little boy; she sang snatches of the old love song, "Nay, Kiss Me No More"; she heaped bitter reproaches upon some one; she begged some one to call her "mother" just once; and she laughed her harsh jarring laugh, and gasped and struggled and broke her long hair till Paul, his tears falling, sat on the bed and held her as he would a little child, till the opiate grasped her.

The Rector glanced covertly at his companion. Did Paul guess what Richard Eldreth had been to this woman, or did he think her reason shaken?

And how had he accounted for the bitterness between his mother and Pierce Eldreth? for Eldreth's hatred of the memory of Paul's father? for Eldreth's very apparent antagonism for Paul himself? But the young man's face was unreadable, and Allan returned to the church, wondering how much Marah might reveal of the sad past.

When he and the physician returned, the latter cleared the Rectory yard alike of the friendly and the morbidly curious. He even sent away Helene and Lilys and Nina. He examined Marah's condition with great care, then passed from the room, Paul following, an unspoken question in his eyes. The physician gave a negative sign, his kindly hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Only a few hours, at most," he said. "I will return when I have seen Mrs. Swensson, with whom also it is but a question of hours."

When Paul returned toward the sick room he was surprised to find the Rector outside the half-open door, pale, his eyes bright from excitement. He laid a finger on his lips and drawing Paul close to his side, pointed into the gloom of the chamber.

Marah was sitting up in bed, rocking a fancied burden in her arms and crooning softly:

"Is it death, is it death, my Dearie ?

Sleep, sleep !

Ne'er to weep, ne'er to weep, nor weary,

Sleep, sleep !

It is death, it is death, my Dearie,  
That's best !  
I'll not weep, I'll not weep ; life is dreary.  
Rest, rest !"

The lullaby done, she stared into vacancy for a while, then sighed repeatedly, " Only one now, only one." Then, with a world of tenderness, " My poor little girly . . . but three days mine!" Next in her harshest, most rasping tone, " Thus should it be, thus shall it be . . . Edith Eldreth . . . . Marah Maitland . . . never forgets!"

As she sank back, white and rigid among the pillows, the Rector sprang to the bed, a great fear stamped upon his face. Was she dead? Would she never speak again?

Paul resumed his place on the side of the bed saying quietly: " She is raving again. I shall repeat the opiate the physician left. Leave her with me, Mr. Allan; you yourself are ill."

But the Rector pushed him firmly aside and went down on his knees beside her. Her eyes opened, and this time sanity shone from their depths.

" What has happened?" she whispered.

" You have been ill," he replied gently, his soothing hand on her forehead. Then as he saw her eyes closing, his fear seized his heart again, and he lifted her quickly, speaking with sharp emphasis, " Ill, delirious, raving."

The effect was magical. The eyes opened instantly, and with quick comprehension, yet with feminine subtlty, she asked:

“What have I . . . told?”

“Your secret, that which all these years has been devouring your soul and consuming your brain.”

She fell back, staring up at him.

“I charge you, Marah Maitland, as a dying woman, soon, so soon, to stand before the Judge of Souls,—I charge you, while yet you may, to right this wrong you have done!”

There was a silence, to one an agonizing, stiffling suspense. So much hung upon that fragile life-thread. . . . Would she never speak?

Paul learned against the headboard of the bed, helpless to arrest or even to turn the flood-tide of his fate.

“Forgive me, Edwin,” moaned the sufferer, “I have been punished too deeply. Ever in the night I can see her glazing eyes, her horrified eyes, as when I tore her baby from her arms and she knew I was unrelenting. I cursed her dying; but the curse has followed me. Only I have suffered, and Paul—poor Paul, who has been so good to me. . . . Ah, fools and dupes, to make a slave of one of your own flesh and blood. . . . Will God be pitiful, since I was not?”

Then it was the divine within him triumphed and

Edwin Allan soothed the passing soul with words of hope, reminding her of the all-forgiving spirit of the Son, bidding her rest on the mercy of the Father.

She sank away, they thought forever and both kneeled, clasping her hands. But her lips moved and a look of ineffable yearning came into her mother-eyes.

“Lilys!”

Paul arose but she clung to his hand and drew him down, searching his face with those same eloquent eyes and rallying all her flickering life into one question. The lips barely moved; there was no voice; yet he knew.

“Above my own life, Mother, always; God hearing me!” he answered solemnly, pressing her hand to his lips.

Then he swiftly left the room and the house; but before he was half way up the hill, Pepito overtook and recalled him; and when he again stood beside the bed, Edwin Allan had already heard the last sigh of those lips; and the soul of Marah Maitland had passed to where it would know no more heart-hunger and no more bitterness and no more sorrow.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## LOVE-BLINDED.

THE remnant of the little family was gathered at the Rectory, themselves to watch with the dead. The undertakers were gone and all preparation for the funeral perfected.

Lilys was in the garden, clipping white roses and iris, while Nina was changing her dress in Lilys's temporary room, the one off the study. The change was slow work with her wounded arm, and she thus became an unwilling listener to part of a conversation between two who entered the study. The subject discussed she could at best only surmise, and much of the conversation she did not understand until afterward.

"Yes, I have known it," Paul's reluctant voice admitted.

"You have *known* it?" came in the Rector's surprised tones, "Why—from whom? How long?"

"Something like a fortnight. I learned it through an accident. I . . . would rather not explain."

"Certainly; but this will put a new face upon—everything. You have thought ahead, of course?"

“I do not intend it shall be known.”

“*Paul!*” gasped Allan’s voice, “You would relinquish name and birthright and——”

But the other’s even tone interrupted: “One cannot well relinquish what he has never had.” Then with a touch of unaccustomed bitterness: “Why should I force myself upon one to whom my very presence has ever been an intrusion? No, one more interview and I’ll have done with him. Willing or unwilling, he shall give me that which I ask. Eldhurst has nothing else I covet,—save always your friendship and the friendship of the Howards.”

“That is not spoken like you, lad. If he has held an antipathy for you, you are now acquainted with the very human reason for it. Besides, this is a question too wide and too weighty for the consideration of personal feelings. A fortnight ago your renunciation had another phase to it; for Richard still lived.”

“If in your opinion, he deserved consideration, does not she? You yourself once told me that pride, social position, honor of name and blood are the very air she breathes. Shall I despoil her of them that I may enjoy them—*I*, into whose keeping she has given her happiness. No, no, the truth shall be buried in that grave to-morrow with her who hid it for twenty good years.”

“Living Truth can not so be buried; Justice is

not so to be set aside for the sake of one woman's pride. She herself would not permit it if she knew."

"But she must never know. Mercy is greater than Justice. O Mr. Allan, it is more than mere pride. Think of all that cursed name implies: reproach, shame, dishonor to man's laws and to God's. I have lived all my life under its black shadow, and I know. Do you think my hand could thrust her into its darkness and myself step up into her sunlight? Why should there be any change? I am accustomed to the name and all that goes with it. A man may live down, may rise above such things. But she—a woman, a girl; think of her, I beg you. All her life she has been sheltered, shielded; has enjoyed high social position, the attention of the exclusive circle within the select circle. Those are your own words to me not a year ago. How can you think of sacrificing her? Have I not sworn to the dying to treasure her above life? What then are mere name and birthright?"

"Be silent!" commanded the other's stern voice, "This inordinate love is blinding you to the right. Strange reasoning, indeed, is this, for one usually so clear-sighted. Your logic is singularly illogical. Sit down, and listen to me."

The walking back and forth across the room ceased and she could hear a chair move. Then the Rector's voice pursued:

“Let me answer you. Why should there be a change? Because an all-wise God has ordered it. How can you thrust her into darkness and yourself take her sunshine? You were willing something more than a fortnight ago, are still willing, to draw her down to share such shadow as yet remains upon a name your life has all but redeemed. Why, then, do you refuse to step up into her clear sunlight, and higher, keeping her there, taking her on and up with you? For water does not more surely seek its level than the wife her husband’s social status. How will she lose so much as an inch of worldly position? Explain it to me, for I do not understand. Will not honor of name still be hers,—your name? Is she not even now wholly wrapped up in you and your achievement? And will she not more and more lose herself in your stronger personality, in your love, in her children? She will thank me for telling her, for after the first little shock——”

“If she were to be told, I myself would tell her; but she shall not know. Wait, Mr. Allan, I can answer you, argument for argument——”

“I have had samples of your very plausible reasoning. Love is a sophist of the first order when his own ends are in view. I have not yet finished answering you. You bid me consider her; but again I say the question is too wide and too weighty to be narrowed and lightened to a matter of personal con-

sideration. Heaven forbid that in counseling you, I should think of her, of you, of any *one* at the expense of the many, of such portion of humanity as your life will touch.

“With, then, the greatest good to the greatest number in view, let us examine the situation. If the truth be suppressed, disinheritance follows the bare announcement of her choice. You retire to your life in a mining-camp, to a narrow field, your pen hindered, your efforts embarrassed, your light under a small bushel. The truth known, and you come naturally to your own, the unhampered management of all things Allan and Eldreth, gathering responsibilities with the years.

“The Allan estate is modest, comparatively; rich only in heirlooms and family tradition. But the Eldreth estate comprizes vastly more than these broad acres. There is the ancestral home near Hartford, with its people; some New York properties with their tenants, besides the mines in California with their workers. And, incidentally, all of these are being grossly mismanaged by self-serving agents. But it is with Eldhurst you will be personally identified,—her colonies of quarrymen, lumbermen, sheepmen and general care-takers. Her interests are widening, her products increasing. Her roll-call of human souls must keep pace from year to year.

“For the management of her varied interests, you have demonstrated a peculiar ability; Pierce Eldreth acknowledges that. You are full of practical plans for the betterment of these dependents; you love them; they love you. Right now, during this most trying time, your influence is proving out. You and I have always dreamed of community work realized here at Eldhurst, with all the attendant blessings. What better field can you ask than that for which Nature has fitted you, and to which Heaven itself has led you through a peculiar preparation of life among the lowly, and by the instrumentality of one whose intentions were certainly foreign to His will?

“The past three months have furnished us an example of mismanagement by mercenary hirelings, with the master absent and absorbed in politics. Can you, sole and rightful heir, retreat within the walls of your own home, so-called, though established under a false name,—can you, shifting your cares to others, stand aside and witness the continuation of this misrule; the growing of one feeble blade of grass for every half-score that might be made to flourish? What a choice! And I tell you

‘Being of the blood you are—my blood—  
You have no right to choose!’

“If a man’s own name be not his peculiar herit-

age, if the bearing of it, together with the responsibilities great and small which the bearing involves, if the perpetuation of this name—if the sum of all these be not duty, then I, His Minister, know neither duty nor God's will concerning man. Paul, my more than son, would you evade these, curtail your influence for good, prescribe your field of usefulness? Nay, you cannot answer even me. How then will you answer Him who gave you your talents and requires of you faithfulness even in the few things—*how?* ”

“God help me! I don't know,” groaned the lover's voice; “I love her—that I do know. And is that not enough, since she loves me? Oh!” and she could hear the chair impatiently moved, “there you stand, Allan, and talk coldly of usefulness, of influence. What are these and the sum of them, to love, of which you are ignorant—incapable, perhaps. You argue serenely of duty—my duty to the ‘greater numbers’ that cumber earth. But what higher duty have I than to the one—the dear one who loves me? Has she not condescended to my level, consented to bear a name to which even I have no right? Has she not flung away all for me? You forget the great and generous gifts of a woman's surrender: her whole ripe beauty, rapture of caress, delight of companionship, responsive sympathy, strength of passion to match and meet my

own, and then—agony of birth that sons may call me father. And I? Am I thus to take and take, man-fashion, giving nothing? What have I to sacrifice worthy the name? Wealth unearned, a father thrust upon me, the tinkling cymbal of an unfamiliar name! Yet these—nothing to me—are life itself to her. You have said so. And again—think! if the whole truth were to be told, *I* must tell her. God! how *could* I? I—who should, who will, save her every pang man may bear for woman! Let be! let be! What matter these baubles of name and lands to ‘which chance makes me unexpected heir’—what matter? Love—that is enough. My earth is already heaven . . . Thou hast ravaged my heart, my sister, my spouse!”

“Paul, hear me! I——”

But Nina had escaped out of hearing.

She walked the rose-hedged paths in search of her friend, her head bowed, her eyes on the ground. At sight of the slow-moving, sable-clad figure, Lilys dropped her armful of flowers and springing forward, impulsively threw her arms around her.

“Nina, dear Sister,” she coaxed sweetly, “don’t think about *him*. You will grieve yourself ill. Oh, it does seem all wrong. The best, the most deserving are the greatest sufferers—first you and now Paul——”

“Hush!” chided the other, “God knows best.

His will be done. I was not thinking of the lost one, nor of myself, the loser; I was thinking of you, dear."

"Of me? Why, I am so—forgive me, but it is truth; in spite of everything, I am happy, so happy."

"You may well be. And whatever befalls, whatever of thorns or of shadows or of sharp turns may lie before you (and God alone knows!) never doubt your husband. Trust to him and be content. For he is as loyal and unfailing as the pole star, with a love that is past all believing. O Lilys, fall on your knees nightly and praise God for His noblest gift—the single-hearted devotion of an unselfish man!"

## CHAPTER XLV.

## INDECISION.

"BUT nothing can come between us, Paul?" questioned Lilys reiterantly some four nights later as he was leaving the Rectory for the Menendez cottage where he had insisted upon stopping ever since his return to Eldhurst.

Nina's earnest words the night they watched with the dead had kept recurring to her all the intervening days, and an unaccustomed heaviness oppressed her heart, usually so care-free. Her uncle had on this evening received a telegram from her father announcing his arrival on the morrow; and the certain knowledge of her father's opposition to her choice in part accounted for her heaviness of heart.

Then too, she was troubled not a little over Paul, but attributed his abstraction to grief for his mother. This evening since the receipt of the telegram, he had seemed more than ever preoccupied. She knew him too well to connect his preoccupation with the coming of her father. Of course he had all Eldhurst on his shoulders again, besides his own affairs (*their* own affairs!) though everything was running

on as smoothly as though he had never resigned his foremanship.

All was well, and they were happy surely, and yet as they lingered before the door of her room off the study, her uncle and Nina having just said good-night, he was standing, his eyes bent on the carpet and his thoughts she knew, far astray.

"But nothing can?" she repeated appealingly.

He recalled himself with an effort. "Only this," he replied, laying his hand on the door-knob, and turning he smiled down at her with a look in his eyes she had not seen there even during these last days when love and sorrow had drawn them so close.

"Not even papa?" she murmured, flushing and dropping her eyes.

"Not even papa," he assured her gravely.

She turned the new "band of virgin gold" upon her finger in thoughtful silence. "If I were in your place," she began.

He caught up the clause quickly. "Aye, if you were in my place, what would you do—tell me."

"I'd not hold you so tight, for one thing," smotheredly.

"But you would hold me, firm and fast?" His tone seemed over-anxious.

"If *I* were in *your* place? Oh, but I can't fancy it—not even make-believe."

“Try.”

She laughed an amused laugh. “Very well. I was born up in the little cottage; I played with the Quarrytown children, went to the public school, or the mission school, and maybe I helped some at the house, washing dishes”—with a wry face—“or polishing the family plate. That dear little room up at the cottage where you are now sleeping is mine, with its home-made rug and muslin curtains. I have always been my own maid, and my best dress this minute is gingham. . . . Oh, I’m certain I should long ago have given up in despair and thrown myself into the arms of the first good-looking quarryman whose house had one more room than the cottage and whose pay would have insured me at least a lawn dress. Or perhaps,” musingly, “Harry once told me that he wished I were a poor girl, that then he’d have married me in spite of myself. But I imagine he would not, if I had been not only poor but——”

She checked herself in embarrassment.

“What has love to do with poverty or with birth?” he questioned a little sharply.

“But I was supposing myself in . . . in your place, you know.”

“So am I supposing it. Wouldn’t you have married Wentworth?”

“No, for if he could have overlooked . . . I

mean that I could not have forgotten—should always have remembered my—” She broke off with an involuntary shudder. Then she looked up quickly. “Oh now I have hurt you; but you began it; you really insisted.”

“But if it had been Paul instead of Harry?” He attempted carelessness, but his voice quivered in spite of his best effort.

She drew up one of his palms and cuddled her soft cheek into it. “I . . . do . not . know,” she whispered, “That would have been—different. If I had loved you as I love you now . . .” He had to stoop lower to get the remainder. “I *must* have been yours . . . to take or to leave; for how could I have lived—” She ended with her lips pressed to his palm.

He laid his other hand to her cheek and gently forced her eyes to meet his.

“Say that again!” he commanded, tenderness blending with the triumph in his tone, “that I need not live without you one hour after your father comes; that whatever chances, you are mine—to take, not leave.”

But she did not say it. When he had lifted her face so that her eyes must again meet that new, dazzling light in his eyes, words forsook her, and her color, though she strove to obey him.

A silence . . . then:

"Now *don't* let us suppose any more," coaxingly, "In your place I'm certain I should never have studied and striven and made of myself all that you have in spite of . . . of . ." And again the untrollable shiver. "'Desperate things' must have been the rule with me in that case, rather than exceptions, as now. Lilys Menendez, so born, must have gone straight to perdition, and gloried in the going. You wouldn't have loved her; I shouldn't have let you—But don't, *don't* let us even make-believe."

Her face had paled, her eyes were stars afire. He smoothed her hair through a pause that on his side was deeply abstracted. Had she looked at him, she must have noted the quiver of pain about his lips, the sad perplexity of his eyes.

"I must go," he announced abruptly, passing a hand over his brow in the way he had when troubled.

"And nothing can come between us—ever."

"Nothing. 'Nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,'" he repeated solemnly. "Come, tell me good-night, my darling, for the last time—in this way." And he drew her to him in the strong, silent, masterful embrace of the man sure of possession before the going down of another sun. She felt the warmth of his mouth through the ringlets of hair on her forehead, on her closed eyelids, as he held her for—neither knew how long.

A sweet faintness crept over her, every fiber of her being quivered response. . . A hot hand wrenched without warning at her heart, and something wild and lawless woke unbidden in her blood. Ancestral forces far and near, conjoining, trounded down the years and the ages, and flung dry fuel upon her suddenly flaming senses—hurled it, heaped it prodigally, gleefully. A little-known voice rose from the deeps of her being in words checked only by the firm pressure of his lips to hers, reckless words which, once uttered, would mean . . . She swayed in his arms, one small hand against his breast, pushing them apart, the other over her lips. No! not again. Another such kiss, another instant in the close prison of his embrace and . . . Her startled eyes questioned his, then fear and maidenly shame overcame her and she shrank away with a sobbing breath.

Did he misinterpret her action? or was it that, furnished with a knowledge not hers, he understood her far better than she understood herself? Whichever it was, he released her instantly, retreated a step, retaining but one of her hands, which he raised to his lips with that delicate, deferent courtesy seemingly a part of his nature.

"Forgive me," he pleaded, "I should not have spoken as I did. I am nothing but a big brute of a man, beside myself with all this unmerited joy.

Go in there, and pray that I may in some way deserve your woman's great gifts to me. Good-night, my Lilys."

He opened the door of her room, resigned her hand and turned quickly away.

But with one of those unaccountable turns of her mercurial temperament, she flung herself before him and clung about his neck, crushing her lips to his with passionate fervor and whispering: "*For the last time!*" Then she fairly ran from him, closing the door swiftly and retreating to the farthest window, leaned trembling and covering her face.

For what seemed hours to her, she lay with her eyes fixed upon the little cottage on the near hill-slope; but sleep claimed her and still it remained unlighted.

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Just as the "wedding-day dawn" was beginning to whiten the east the Rector entered the little chapel to prepare for his special sunrise service, and there he came upon one kneeling with head bowed to the low altar-rail. He paused unbetrayed and remained as motionless as the figure at his feet. Slowly his right hand extended above that unconscious head and the sign of the Cross hovered in the sentient air. Then he retreated noiselessly, his eyes moist, his lips moving.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## AS A MAN SOWETH.

PIERCE Eldreth was hurrying westward as swiftly as steam could bear him. He would arrive on the afternoon of the fifth day after Marah's funeral, and would of course come direct to the Rectory.

Lilys tried to wait up for him, but she was too worn from the strain of the last fortnight. She had crept into the great chair with Paul, and was striving against the drowsiness engendered by the stillness of the study and her own weariness.

He was holding her just as he had held her that stormy night in Marah's cottage, only now the face against his breast was warm with life, the lips red and responsive, and the eyes looked back into his own with passionate devotion. But he held her so comfortably and the study was so dim and quiet, that by and by the tired lids closed and her lover not moving a muscle, sat, his enraptured gaze on her, oblivious to all else in the universe.

From the opposite side of the table, the Rector regarded the tableau, smilingly wondering what Pierce Eldreth would say—or do—should he that

moment open the study door! Then the smile passed, and he uttered a prayer of gratitude that the girl-heart so dear to him had been awakened by one whose high soul would never exact, nay, would decline to accept, all the lavish gifts her warm blood and impetuous nature would unregretfully bestow.

The clock struck two. Paul stirred, smoothed back the girl's hair and touched her cheek. She opened her eyes and smiled dreamily, but closed them again.

If Miss Eldreth would be kind enough to release him from the duties of nurse, there were several other duties with claims upon his valuable time. She would better go into the bedroom now and take some rest, else she would certainly be ill.

She would go, she agreed, if he would come and sit beside her.

But no, he must see both Wagner and Johnson this afternoon, and write the acting manager of the Hopeful.

In that case, she would go with him to the grain-fields and to the quarries and to the office.

By no manner of means. It would be the height of impropriety for her to go trailing him about over the premises, everything considered, wouldn't it, Mr. Allan? She had done overmuch of that already. There was scandal-spinning enough now, didn't she think?

Well, but he was the tired one. Hadn't he just come down from the lumber-camp? He'd be ill, wouldn't he, Uncle? So if he would not lie there on the couch and let her read to him, he would please order Bonita. She was sorry to oppose him now in the very beginning, but she was going with him.

He would beg to remind her that from the boundary-line of Eldhurst east to the Rocky Mountains west, he was the only recognized authority; monarch of all things surveyed and unsurveyed. If she doubted it, he would respectfully refer her to Wagner, Johnson, Max and Webb.

She thereupon sprang from the chair and retreated to her uncle's. He was a domineering, iron-handed tyrant, worse than her father, and she had her doubts about changing from one master to the other.

He turned toward the door; but somehow she was there before he was, her back against it, her eyes a challenge, her lips a temptation. I'm afraid he was not properly reluctant in accepting the challenge, in yielding to the temptation. I'm afraid also that they were indecorous enough to forget, for some moments, the presence of a scandalized third party. When they did recollect, her color was considerably heightened and he was laughing at her.

But she smoothed her hair complacently, and with

the other hand triumphantly clutching his coat-sleeve, led him back to a chair on which lay her hat and riding-gloves.

With a glance of helpless, whimsical dismay toward the Rector he picked her up and without further ado carried her into the adjoining room, closed all the inner blinds, and threatening to lock her in if she did not at once go to sleep, he left her.

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Eldreth found his brother-in-law alone in the study. The unhappy father looked travel-stained and haggard; and the tidings he had gathered from dispatches and the daily papers and from Pepito en route from town had done the work of years in aging him and in taming his inordinate pride.

Sarah brought a tray into the study and would have wakened Lilys, but Eldreth said no, to let the tired little girl sleep. So, while he discussed the burden of the tray and afterward sipped his wine, the Rector filled in the details of the eventful days of his absence from home. Of Richard, he spoke charitably, yet truthfully, laying much of the blame of the strike at Schmidt's door. He told of Nina's heroic devotion, of the funerals, of Hilma's death and of Marah's death, this last, however with some vital omissions.

"It was the death of her boy that killed her," concluded Allan "this in conjunction with the fact

that she had been somewhat instrumental in the strike-troubles. Her lucid moments were measured and her words few and broken; but I gathered that her life has been one long, premeditated sacrifice to her revenge, which was to have been the reduction of your pride through the attachment of your child for hers, the one reared to luxury and culture, the other as coarse as poverty and ignorance could make him. For this purpose she bound Paul to your service; and I unconsciously helped defeat her plan by educating him in secret. She acknowledged the futility of all vengeance save heaven's; she had been the only sufferer. She admitted her part in stirring up the trouble, and her punishment in the death of her favorite child."

The narrator's head sank on one hand, and his voice lowered:

"All her life here, despite her coldness and bitterness, she has loved but one. Not the man with whom she lived, adoring her as he did; not her benefactor, as she styled me; but him who, in the rose-flush of youth, called her womanhood to full life, the father of her precious first-born. To the last breath she gloried in her shame. With that father's consent, she would now have it known that the child had been hers. In the passionate love of this man, she all but forgot the compassionate love of God, and this in the hour of death! And Pierce,"

his voice sank to a whisper, "she died with this man's name on her lips."

"My God! Edwin! Don't, don't!" The master of Eldhurst bowed his head to both hands and his shoulders shook convulsively.

His companion rose and moved to a window, and for half an hour no sound was heard in the room save the ticking of the clock.

At the end of that time, Eldreth straightened up, shook himself as though to free himself once for all of old memories and asked abruptly, as though he had just arrived:

"Well, Edwin, how's everything?"

The Rector came back to his chair, brushing his eyes and clearing his throat.

"All right, I believe."

"Quarries shut down, or Italians at work?"

"Neither. Your own men are back."

"You don't say! At restored wages, I suppose?"

"No; that's the beauty of it. He put on the entire force, it is true, but at the cut wage, and every man's at work this minute."

"I . . . see. And the sawmill?"

"Webb reconsidered his resignation, came back all the way to say so; but of course he'd have to have union men. His own men were given one chance at their old positions, with many a hedging proviso, I can tell you. In any case, they must all

leave Quarry Town at once, that night. And they left. Most of them went to work when the mills started up. So much time had been lost that both foremen were asked to work their men early and late, and the men are doing the overtime cheerfully, I understand, with both foremen well pleased."

"Webb and Schmidt?"

"No, Webb and Johnson, with Garia assisting Johnson. Schmidt has been discharged."

"Well, I like that!"

"The men would not have done themselves justice under him after his high-handed doings. Besides, you wired 'Full authority.'"

"He seems to have used it. Anything else?"

"He talked a minute or two there at Schmidt's gate that night. Until the carriage came, he devoted his time to Richard, as we all did, directing the disposition of Hanson's body and the two wounded men. Then when the carriage was gone, he spoke quietly to the mob. He promised the strikers a careful, impartial investigation of the whole matter at once upon your return. He assured them of full justice, whoever the sufferers. He put it as a personal request that they go, each man to his own home, save those who were to minister to the bereaved families. He told them he did not believe any part of Eldhurst needed military rule, least of all the Swedish village, which had

always been the pattern of order for the other helpers of the ranches. They must be their own sureties for peace and order, answerable to him, personally, as he intended dismissing the deputies there and then. This he proceeded to do and they returned to Boulder, taking their prisoner. Upon Schmidt's request for guards for his house the remainder of the night, he actually called for volunteers from the quarrymen themselves, and got two! Then, late though it was, he hustled the whole lot of men from the Lower Ranch back to where they belonged, with the reliable Luis at their head. Next he marched the Italians off to their sleeping quarters like so many sheep, assuring them that they would be paid in full and dismissed in the morning. I went to the House; he remained in the village all night. And if you will believe me, Pierce Eldreth, an hour after he got off his horse at Schmidt's gate, in spite of the terrible, tragic happenings, the streets of Quarry Town were as quiet and deserted as those of ancient Pompeii. No talking in groups, no excitement; but every man to his own home and lights out, save where the wounded were being cared for. It was marvelous."

Eldreth laughed. "That boy is a general, and no mistake. I once told you my opinion of his executive ability. This confirms it. I'll have to confess that I rested pretty easy myself after I wired you to send for him."

"Yet, after all, it is not so marvelous," mused the other, "when you consider that there is not one family in the entire village but Paul's kindness has at some time and in some manner touched; not a man of them but he has taken by the hand as a brother. He has gone to them in sickness and trouble and discouragements; he has taught their children; advised, sympathized, emptied his pockets. His money buried Bradley's wife; he got Shorty Anderson in at the Lyons quarries when you discharged him; he took the Hanson's little crippled girl to the hospital; he nursed Wagner's boy when Marah had another case—and so on through the list. And besides, he possesses what is a rare gift: natural executive ability tempered by a wise tact that persuades without compromising itself; that gains its own good ends by only seeming to yield. Edith had the same gift. I have seen her manage with ease the most-to-be-dreaded elements in our slum work; change discord to harmony in our most difficult church work as though by magic; and this ac—" He checked himself and added: "Then as you know, he has a strong personality, a potent magnetism. One of the strikers, one of the ring-leaders, said to me afterward that he didn't know *why* they dispersed; not because they wanted to, or intended to; not because they hadn't wrongs, wrongs unrighted, but—well, because Paul had told them to, because Paul was Paul!"

"Yes," nodded Eldreth, "I know; I've noticed. During my own recent foremanship, brilliant, if brief, I met that same spirit everywhere. Wagner had decided upon a certain order of crop-rotation; and did I, (*I, Pierce Eldreth!*) think that Paul would have approved it? And I had to discharge McCune, the best horse-trainer in Colorado, because on two occasions he hinted that I didn't run things as Paul did! The boy got a great hold on the tenantry—sort of a personal magnetism pull. He's modest enough, but he has an assertive individuality, is a born manager of men. Only where does he get it? There's where the marvel comes in. It knocks some of my pet theories cold. I'll never hear the last of this from Nolan—confound him!"

His brother-in-law smiled oddly, but confined himself to remarking: "I was certainly proud of my disciple. You couldn't have done better yourself."

"Not so well; for I'm afraid I should have carried out poor Dick's policy—sent for the state militia and cleaned out the town."

A quick, firm step was heard on the porch.

"There he is now," whispered the Rector, "I trust you will remember all he has done. The Anderson-Swensson faction had fully planned to burn the House; a member of it confessed after Paul came; more mischief was prevented than you

will ever know. So be considerate, if only for my sake."

The other turned him a haggard face. "My Lord!" he said brokenly "haven't I had my lesson? If I had learned it earlier, I'd have a son alive to-day. Now the old name must die."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## FATHER AND SON.

When Paul entered, he was greeted by words he had never hoped to hear from the lips of his former employer :

"I want to thank you, Menendez, for all you've done and for the way in which you've done it. You have saved me hundreds of dollars and a number of good workmen, to say nothing of time and trouble."

But it did not escape Paul that the words were unaccompanied by an extended hand, and that the tone and manner savored of condescension. The man seemed unable to render them otherwise.

The three sat down and talked the situation over from beginning to end. When all had been covered, Eldreth asked :

"By the way, what's become of the coachman? I noticed Pepito brought the carriage."

"William's been laid off, sir, or at least he was requested to go sober up, pending your arrival."

"Has Lena been dismissed?" queried the other sarcastically "and is Helene still with us?" Then

dropping his light tone, "Well, I presume I could offer you no inducement to leave Bradley and return to Eldhurst to keep things from going to the eternal damnations when I am away?"

Paul sent an amused under-glance toward the Rector, laced his shapely fingers together and said reflectively:

"I might, if . . . ."

"If what?" questioned the elder man eagerly, "I shall have to be gone a great deal from now on; and you have certainly earned the right to dictate terms in this; so name your price."

"Mr. Eldreth," said the young man abruptly, "I have the honor to request your daughter's hand in marriage."

"To—request—*WHAT*—sir?" gasped the other, "I . . I did not—understand you."

Paul repeated his request slowly and clearly.

Pierce Eldreth stood up, and sat down again. Then he lay back in his chair and blinked at his companion for a full speechless minute.

"Well, I'll be—" he began; then turning upon his brother, "There! Edwin Allan, I told you it was unwise, dangerous, to give any one man the idea that your business couldn't run on without him. Hear what this young fool is asking: the hand of Lilys Eldreth, sole heiress now of my estate. His price is high indeed! Why, you young idiot,"

whirling upon the young man, "the very last time I mentioned your name to my daughter, she forbade my speaking it again and declared she hated you from her soul."

Paul lifted an aggravatingly placid gaze and replied calmly:

"Ah, but that was before she learned I had never received the letter she sent me."

Eldreth flushed and dropped his eyes for a moment, but he rallied:

"She loves a young foreigner, a nobleman."

"No, she merely tried to," corrected the other.

"She has accepted his ring by this time."

"I fear you are misinformed."

"You mean to tell me that a daughter of mine has discarded such an offer, and for *you*?"

"Send for her; ask her," with a gesture toward the bed-room door, "It is unbelievable, I admit. It was some time before I could credit it. But when a girl consents to live with a man in a tent in a mining camp, she must have some regard for him."

The father seized angrily upon one word of the reply:

"A girl—that's just it. You are both in pinafores yet—striplings, fledglings, infants!"

"You were a father before you were my age."

Eldreth rose hastily and walked to a far window. The Rector looked imploringly at Paul, but the

young man shook his head, and the embarrassed silence continued. When Eldreth finally turned from the window, he exclaimed in a quivering voice:

"I am a fool to argue with you. I wonder, sir, you dare dream such a thing, you—with but one coat to your back and as you have said, but little better than a tent to offer her!" He made no allusion to Paul's parentage. He was being considerate of Edwin Allan's disciple!

There was the merest suggestion of suppressed amusement in the younger man's tone as he modestly announced:

"I am making something with my pen now and then."

"Your pen! Lord above, hear him! Have you any idea what it costs to keep Lilys Eldreth in gloves and handkerchiefs every year?"

"I have still another source of income, adequate for at least gloves and handkerchiefs, perhaps ribbons. I can satisfy you upon that point, sir. I don't mind telling you, now you've consented."

"Consented? Damn it! who said anything about consenting?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon if I misunderstood you. But we had so hoped to go with your sanction," significantly.

"Which implies you will go, sanction or no sanction?" eying the speaker.

Paul did not reply; but there was a touch of regret in his eyes as he looked past his questioner and out of the window.

The master of Eldhurst scrutinized the figure before him from the crown of the fair hair to the soles of the trim feet, every inch of it, then back to the face again, with its grave, half-smiling eyes—scrutinized it carefully and intently as though he were looking over some rare curio for the first time. Then he drawled:

“Young man, I have all my life admired nerve in whomsoever if only it were the genuine, simon-pure article; but yours—yours is the limit!” Then turning to his brother-in-law: “I believe I mentioned modesty as one of this young *gentleman’s* qualities. On the face of matters, I must be allowed to retract. Modest! Ha! ha!” He ended in a sneering laugh that jarred unpleasantly.

Paul sprang to his feet, his eyes blue lightnings.

“Pierce Eldreth!” and the usually firm voice quivered, “this is no matter for laughing, as you will learn. Do you think I am here for trifling? Do you imagine anything you can say or do will affect results? that anything under God’s heaven can keep me from possession of the woman I love? Undeceive yourself. But I have extended to you the courtesy customary between man and man; I have waited your return; have gone to the unneces-

sary trouble of asking your consent. I am of age; so is she. I can not recall a time when I have not loved her; if you had not all been stone blind, you would have seen it. As to her feeling for me—had I known the truth last June, she would to-day be the bride of a year. For the rest, I am strong and able to work; thanks to Mr. Allan, I can read and write fairly, and my photograph does not appear in the rogues' gallery. If you plead her superiority, there is no argument; I admit it. But you yourself won a woman far your superior. The average man does. I claim the right. My father \_\_\_\_\_”

Eldreth had come to his feet. He took one menacing stride. “Your father—yes, your father!” he cut in fiercely, “his past, his excesses, his cringing guilt, his blood-stained soul—what of them, of their transmission to progeny?”

Paul met him more than half way, his clenched hands tightening, his control an apparent effort:

“Unfortunately, one may not choose his father as he may his garments. True, there was his sin before my birth. I must expiate that sin? So be it. But what expiation does your code require beyond youth spent, toil unpaid, galling bondage, daily humiliation, hourly insult, soul-crucifixion? What more? Are your standards higher than Edwin Allan's? your requirements more exacting than Al-

mighty God's? And there is my inheritance, you argue, never to be escaped. But no! not what I inherit, but what I see fit to accept of that inheritance—that and that only counts. What! shall the bestial indulgences of an irresponsible father once and for all time quench the divine spirit, the upward will, the purging fire in the souls of his children's children? I say to you: not 'eight generations to make a gentleman,' nay, nor seven, nor six, but *one*—in the name of American Manhood, *ONE*! And now, not the past, but the future. 'Instead of my fathers, my sons,' whom I, by the grace of God,—even Paul Menendez, may 'make princes in all the earth.' Who shall prevent? Not you, Pierce Eldreth, nor a host like you. Now sir, I am asking your consent to our union, or, denied that, a decent denial with your reasons. It is a *gentleman's* question; and I demand a *gentleman's* answer.' ”

Paul had regained his usual self-command; his voice had steadied, his eyes had resumed their deep serenity. His companion, at first fairly breathless from the audacity of that speech, now stood with relaxing fists, his glance at first defiant, now inquiring, searching.

But behind the gaze that met and held his own there lay a something he lacked, the mother-gift of high moral worth the strong, unyielding fiber of a gracious manhood. As he looked into the soul

through those eyes, it came to him vaguely that his own character, himself, appeared dwarfed and misshapen in this man's presence, who was what he was despite both heredity and environment. Surely, he had never seen the real man before—the man, self-made, self-reliant, self-strong, standing in the place he had made for himself, though nameless. Come to look, here was something sturdy and respect-compelling.

And there was yet another element deeper down that held him with a new fascination, a subtle exchange of soul-force that flashed between the two. Pierce Eldreth at last recognized unmistakably something kindred to his own in this proud nature, something mutually sympathetic grappling each to each.

He did not speak, but he passed his right hand slowly over his eyes, then even more slowly extended it—that heretofore unproffered hand!

There was an instant of hesitation, then it was met by the close firm grasp of the other.

Edwin Allan came with misty eyes and stood, a hand on the shoulder of each.

"Are you answered, lad? Are you satisfied?" he asked the one.

"Wholly so."

"And you?" he asked the other.

"It seems that I am—that I shall have to be. I

must say. . . . ” He was still clinging to Paul’s hand and looking bewildered.

“ No, you must not,” laughed the Rector, “ You have said quite enough, both of you. It is my turn now. Sit down and listen to me.”

---

Weary little Lilys was awakened at length by the sound of men’s voices coming from the study. It was almost dark. Her father had come and they had allowed her to sleep.

As she smoothed her hair and the “ pretty pink frock ” of Paul’s liking, her lover’s words recurred to her: “ The very moment your father says “ Yes,” (or “ No,” rather) you are to be made mine, whether that moment be noontime or midnight.” And she thought of their parting last night, flushing warmly, though no eyes were upon her save those of her own reflection. She knew he would make good his words, for that very morning he had gone to the county-seat on “ important business with the county clerk,” as he had laughingly told her and Nina.

But her father would say “ No.” That was foregone. And the encounter would be disagreeable enough. She braced herself mentally, as she tapped for admission and entered at the same time. She paused in the door—the very door by which Edith

Allan had entered the presence of two of the men more than twenty years before.

"O Papa!" she began; but something in the attitude and faces of the group arrested both her tongue and her feet. She saw traces of actual tears on her father's cheek, and he had been as she entered, smiling proudly, yes fondly, up at Paul Menendez, who stood near his chair. Seeing was believing!

"Lilys," and Pierce Eldreth strove to render steady his voice tremulous with his new-found happiness, "Lilys, I have been driven into a close corner from which you alone can rescue me. This young gentleman, by simply pressing a button or two, has set things to rights here; and now in payment, he modestly asks both ranches; and he would also rob your old father of a daughter that he may have a wife. Come here to me, my child."

But Paul took a step toward her, reaching his arms.

"No, come to me, dear," persuaded the Rector lovingly, patting his knee, "I won't let them tease you, and I will tell you the whole truth at once."

"But Uncle—but Papa," faltered Lilys, slowly advancing and trying to determine if it were all jest or earnest.

"Yes, I think we'll have to allow you to call us uncle and papa the remainder of our days," laughed

Eldreth, "So ho!" as she slipped past them both and into the arms stretched to her, "then that tent story is authentic? But if you snub me this way for him, I may not let you pitch your precious tent within forty miles of Eldhurst."

"Allow me to call them uncle and papa—let us stay here? Why, Paul, what does it all mean?" cried the puzzled girl.

He smoothed back her hair with an unsteady hand and looked down into her eyes, a Spartanlike smile in his own.

"It means that his 'allows' and 'lets' are mere graspings after a vanishing authority. For he is no longer the ruling despot; he is uncrowned, dethroned."

He gathered her closer against his heart, holding her as one holds the best beloved into whose tender flesh the necessary lancet is about to be thrust. His strong lips quivered, his voice lost its forced levity, and fell to a cadence of inexpressible tenderness:

"It means that for the hour I am to rob you of your name, my darling,—only long enough to restore it to you for life; that I, Paul Eldreth, am master of Eldhurst, and you, as always, *its* Little Mistress—and *mine!*"

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